Peggy
PEGGY@DREAMGIRL.COM
Jo Chen

I CONSIDER MYSELF A GOOD-LOOKING GUY, BUT I'VE NEVER BEEN VERY POPULAR WITH THE LADIES.
MY NAME IS ZONGWEN CHEN. SOME PEOPLE CALL ME PINEAPPLE WEN BECAUSE OF MY HAIR. I'M A JUNIOR AT NANPING HIGH SCHOOL. THIS IS MY STORY.
?
A LITTLE LATE TO BE SORRY! YOU'RE ALREADY GUILTY!
OH, I'M SORRY.
BUMP
PFFT! SO COOL!
SEE, WASN'T THAT THE BEST LINE EVER? NICE AND SMOOTH.
SHHH. NOT SO LOUD.
ALL THE GIRLS HATE HIM.
THAT'S ZONGWEN CHEN, THE JUNIOR. DON'T TAKE IT PERSONALLY--HE'S ALWAYS LIKE THAT.
WHAT A JACKASS!

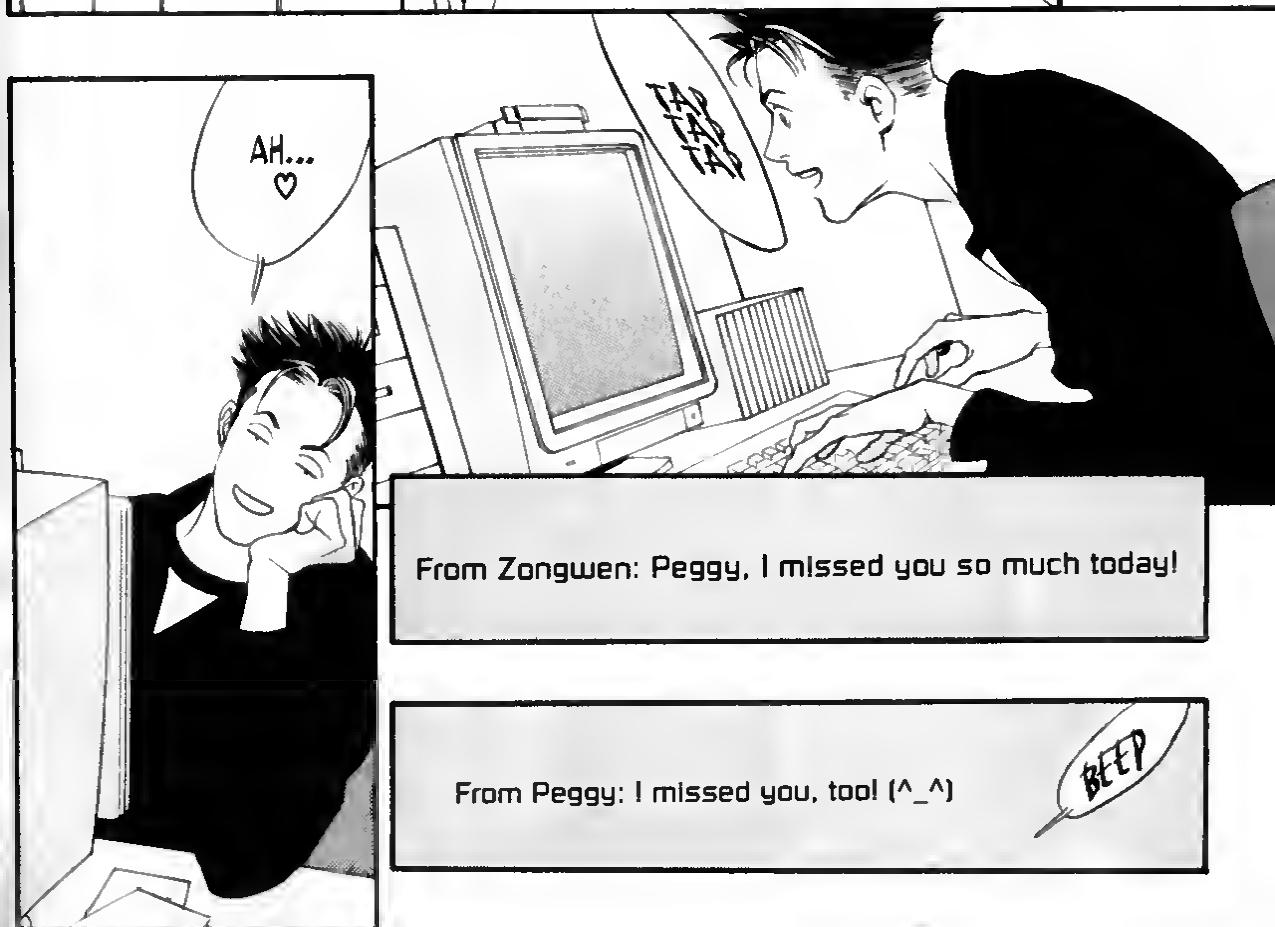
I GOT YOU SOME CHOCO-LATES!
HI!
BUT...
Keh!
Never received choco-lates.
...I'D RATHER BE SELECTIVE THAN SORRY.
THE GIRLS ARE ALL STARTING TO HAND OUT CHOCOLATES TO THE GUYS THEY LIKE.
...
ME, TOO!
I...
VALENTINE'S DAY IS NEXT WEEK.
LUCKY FOR ME...
...I'VE ALREADY FOUND TRUE AND PERFECT LOVE.

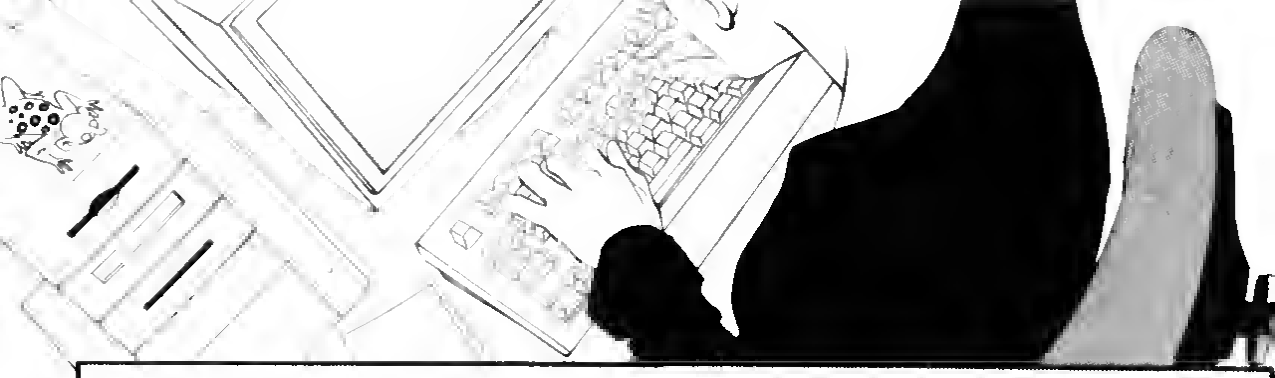
1.
2.
WE HAVE THE SAME DIE-HARD LOVE FOR ULTIMATE FIGHTING.
HEY! YOU IN THE BACK, FEET ON THE FLOOR!
WE'VE GOT A LOT IN COMMON. WE BOTH DESPISE BOY BANDS.
PINEAPPLE WEN.
WHO'S IN CHARGE OF MOPPING THE FLOOR?
HEH!
SHE EVEN FINISHED FINAL FANTASY IN TWO DAYS. SHE'S PERFECT!
DAMN! HE SKIPPED OUT ON HIS DUTIES AGAIN!
MY GIRL IS SO KIND AND SWEET.
WHAT?
YOU THINK SHE SOUNDS TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE?

HER NAME IS--
SHE'S REAL AND SHE'S MINE!
No, no, no!
WELL, I HATE TO BREAK IT TO YOU!
Peggy
Peggy!
Oh...!!
Just saying her name makes my heart race!

AND NOTHING CAN SEPARATE US!
TAP TAP TAP
WE'VE BEEN TOGETHER FOR OVER A YEAR.
Sound too good to be true?

IT'S LIKE HE'S A NEW PERSON.
THESE DAYS, HE COMES RIGHT HOME AFTER SCHOOL.
ZONGWEN USED TO BE SUCH A HANDFUL.
WE'VE NEVER MET IN PERSON.


AH... ♡
TAP TAP TAP
From Zongwen: Peggy, I missed you so much today!
From Peggy: I missed you, too! (^_^)
BEEP



From Zongwen: How did you like the necklace I sent you?

From Peggy: I love it. It's too bad we didn't get to see each other. (T_T)

BEEP

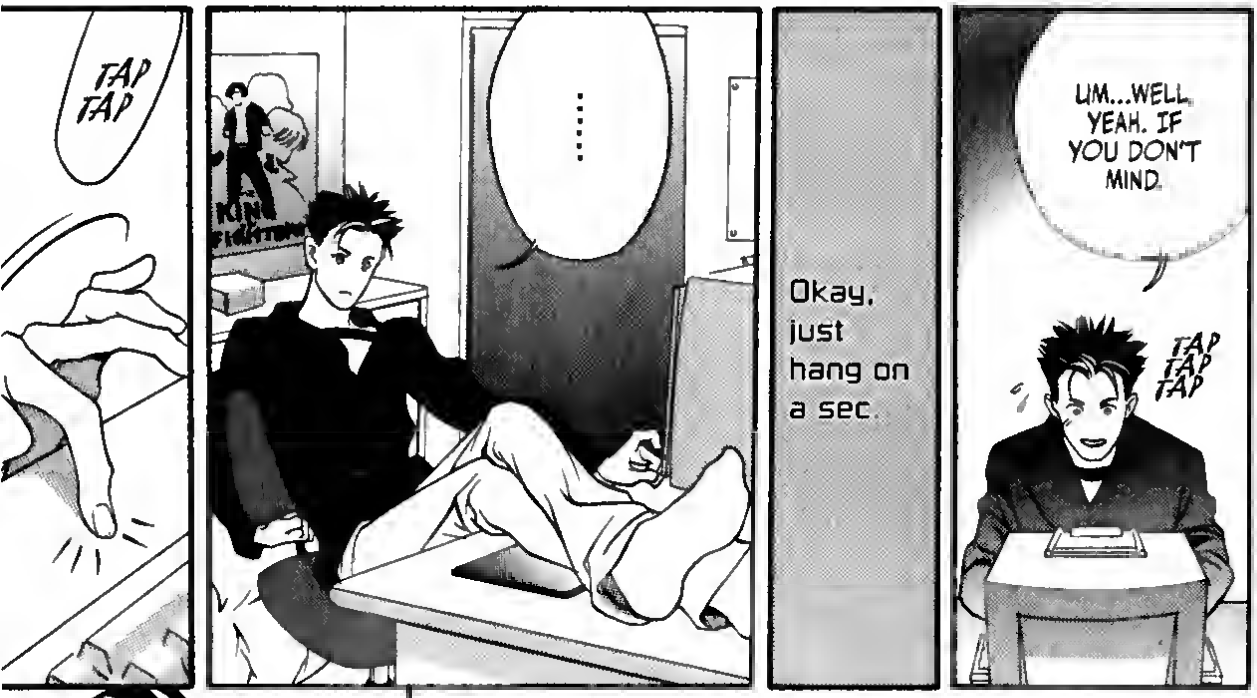
From Zongwen: It's okay. We can see each other next time!

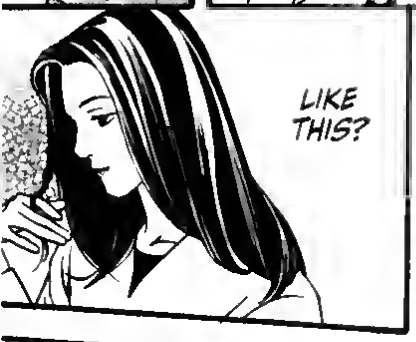
THADUMP
GULP
THADUMP
Hmmm...
thadump
thadump
...ASK FOR HER PICTURE.
...If it's okay, I mean. Um... could I have a picture of you?

Sure!

THUD
YES!
HA HA!

I don't think I have anything saved right now. But I can find something to scan. Do you want it now?



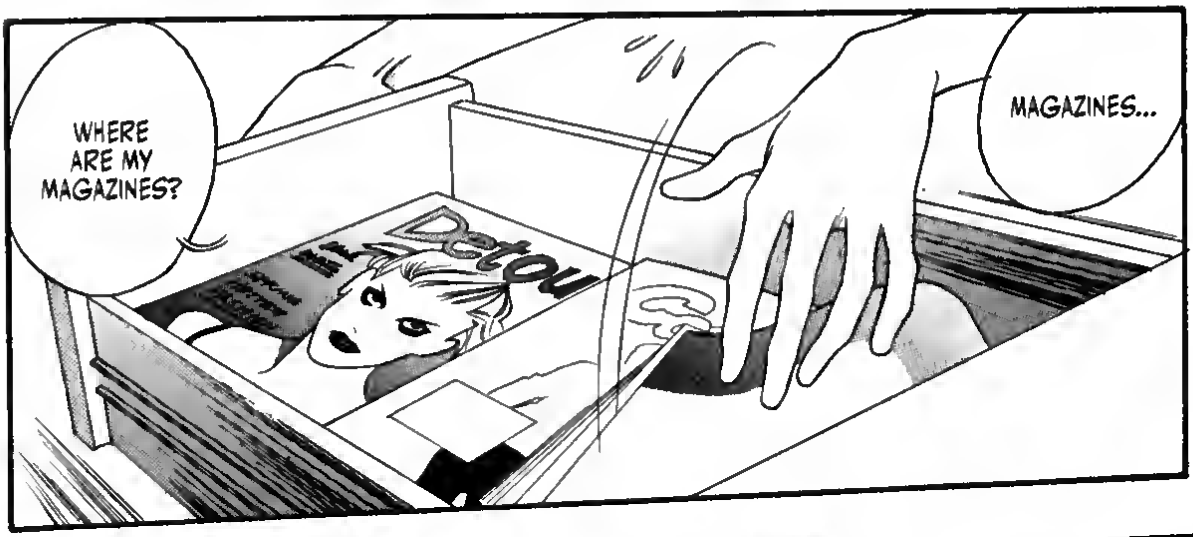


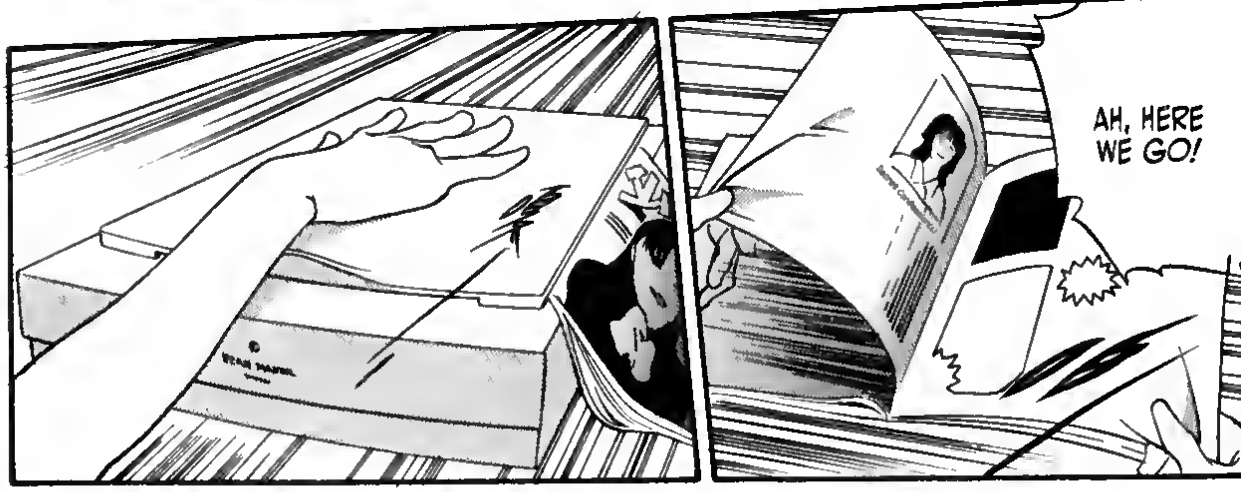
WE'VE BEEN TOGETHER FOR SO LONG, BUT I'VE NEVER ACTUALLY MET HER.

IT TOOK A WHILE FOR THE SCAN TO COME THROUGH. AND MY MIND BEGAN TO WANDER.

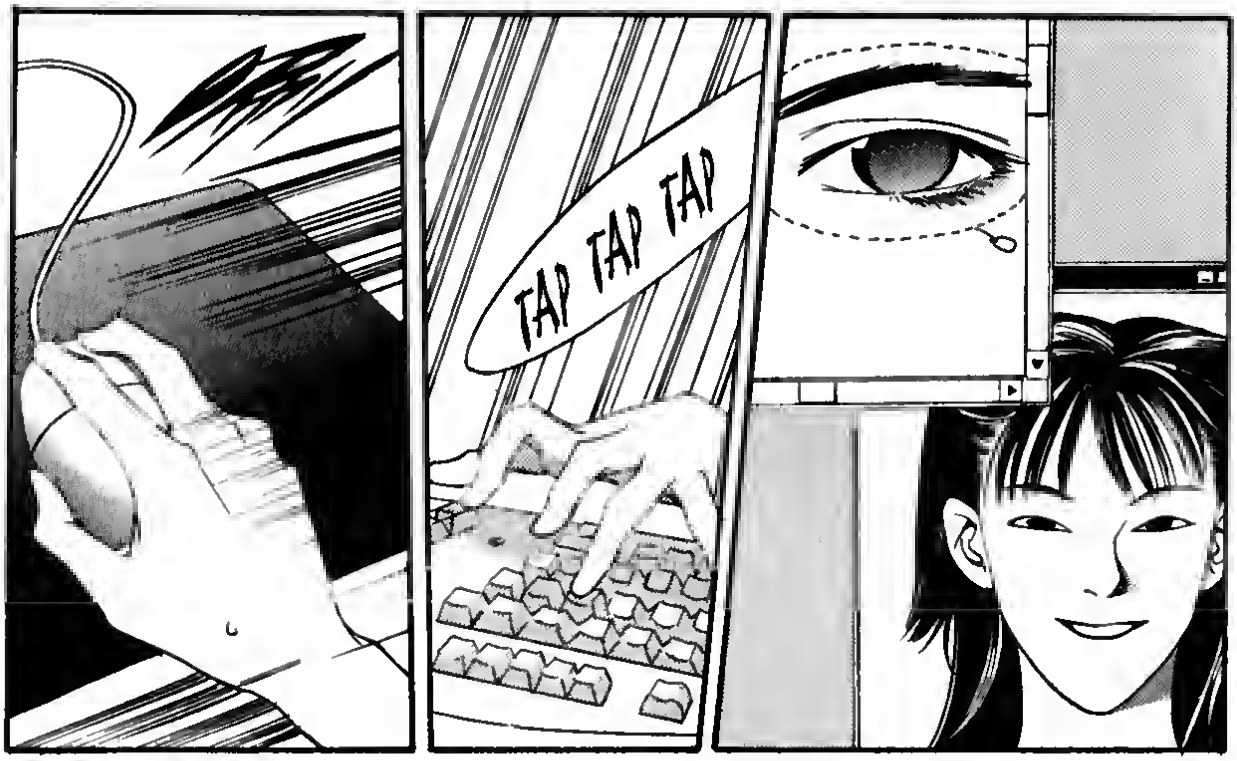
I HAVE NO IDEA WHAT SHE LOOKS LIKE

WHY IS HE SUDDENLY ASKING ME FOR A PICTURE?
OH, GREAT.
OR...


WHERE ARE MY MAGAZINES?
MAGAZINES...
Détou

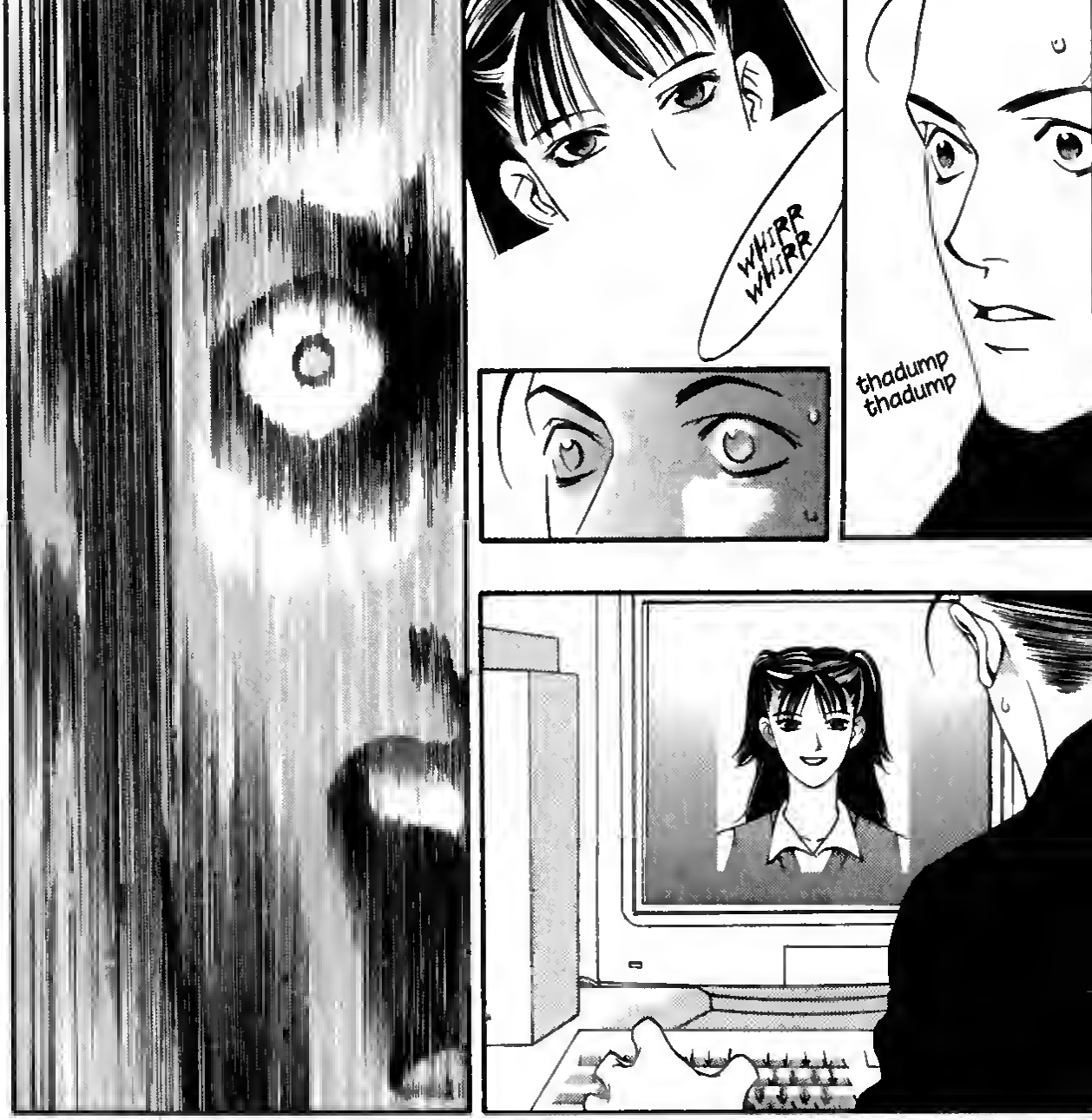

AH, HERE WE GO!

WHIIIRRR


TAP TAP TAP

MEANWHILE, AT ZONGWEN'S PLACE
OH, MAN! THIS IS TAKING FOREVER!

WHIRR WHIRR

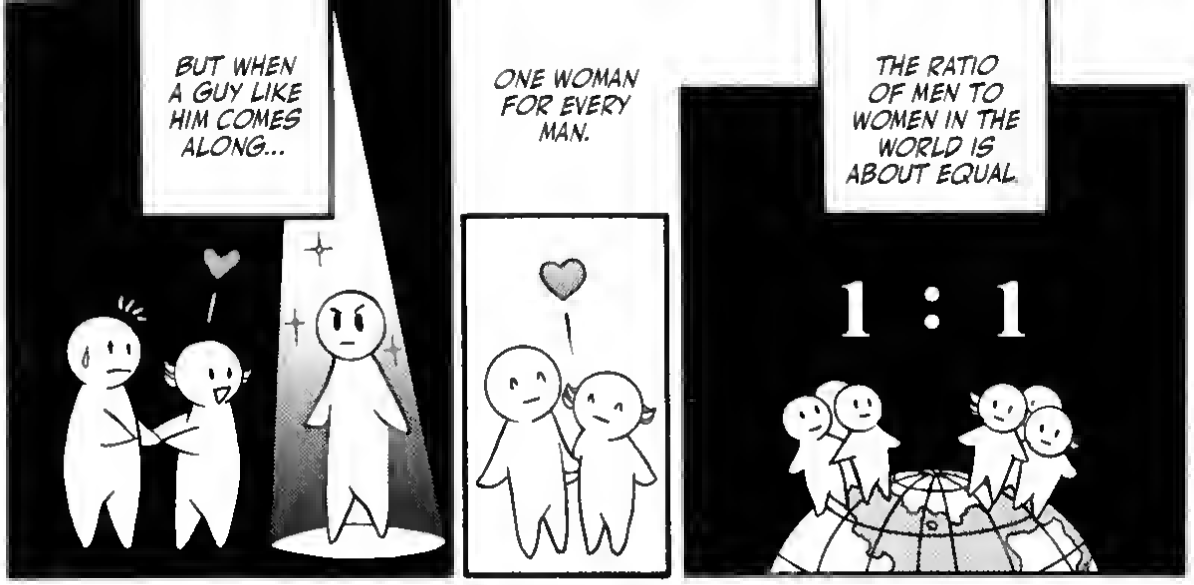

WHIRR WHIRR
thadump thadump

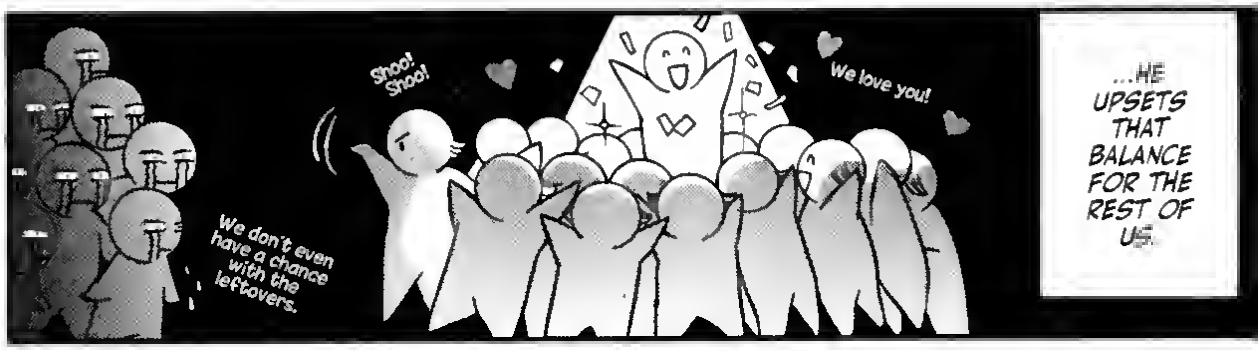
THUD
HERE IT COMES!! YEAAAH!

ZONGWEN, ARE YOU ALL RIGHT? IT'S TIME FOR DINNER.
I'M OKAY.
PEGGY! YOU'RE A GODDESS!
HEH HEH! UNBELIEVABLE! SHE'S ADORABLE!

PICK MINE!
TAKE THESE!
TRY MINE!
ACCEPT THESE!
PEIQL THESE CHOCOLATES ARE HOME MADE!
Awkward Loser's Club
WHAT DO THEY KNOW?
TURDS ALWAYS ATTRACT FLIES
SHIT.
GIMME A BREAK
Teachers With Giant Jugs
WHAT DO THEY SEE IN THAT GUY?

JINGHUI LI. HE'S INFATUATED, BUT SHE TURNED HIM DOWN.
WHAT'S HIS PROBLEM?
THAT'S HER.
SHE'S SUCKING UP TO PRETTY BOY WITH THE REST OF THEM.
Look, she can't even get close.
SNORT!
DOOFUS?
SOB!
SNIFF!
HE'S ALWAYS SURROUNDED BY THOSE GROUPIES.
WHO DIED AND MADE HIM KING?
BUT, BUT...
FORGET ABOUT HER. SHE'S NOT EVEN THAT GOOD-LOOKING.
Boo Hooo Hoooooo...
SOLIDARITY, BOYS! WE DON'T NEED THEM. EAT ALONE, RUIN YOUR APPETITE; EAT TOGETHER, AND EVERYTHING IS FINE!
PEIQI YU!


BUT WHEN A GUY LIKE HIM COMES ALONG...
ONE WOMAN FOR EVERY MAN.
THE RATIO OF MEN TO WOMEN IN THE WORLD IS ABOUT EQUAL.
1 : 1


Shoo! Shoo!
We love you!
We don't even have a chance with the leftovers.
...HE UPSETS THAT BALANCE FOR THE REST OF US.

HE CAN DO WHATEVER HE WANTS.
I'M ABOVE ALL OF THIS. WHAT'S BENEATH ME MATTERS NOT, MY GOOD MAN.
Teacher's Wife Giant Sage

HE DOESN'T EVEN HAVE A GIRLFRIEND...
...SO THEY ALL THINK THEY HAVE A CHANCE WITH HIM!
Also a victim.
No...
PINEAPPLE WEN, DOESN'T HE BOTHER YOU, TOO?

THOSE LOWLIFES ARE NO MATCH FOR ITS RADIANCE!
YOUR LOVE ENVELOPES ME.
HEE HEE.
WOO HOO! PINEAPPLE DOESN'T SEEM THAT CONCERNED.
HE'S UP TO SOMETHING, I'LL BET.
OH, PEGGY! MY SUNSHINE GODDESS!

I THINK HE'S LOST IT.
HEE HEE HEE. HA HA HA!

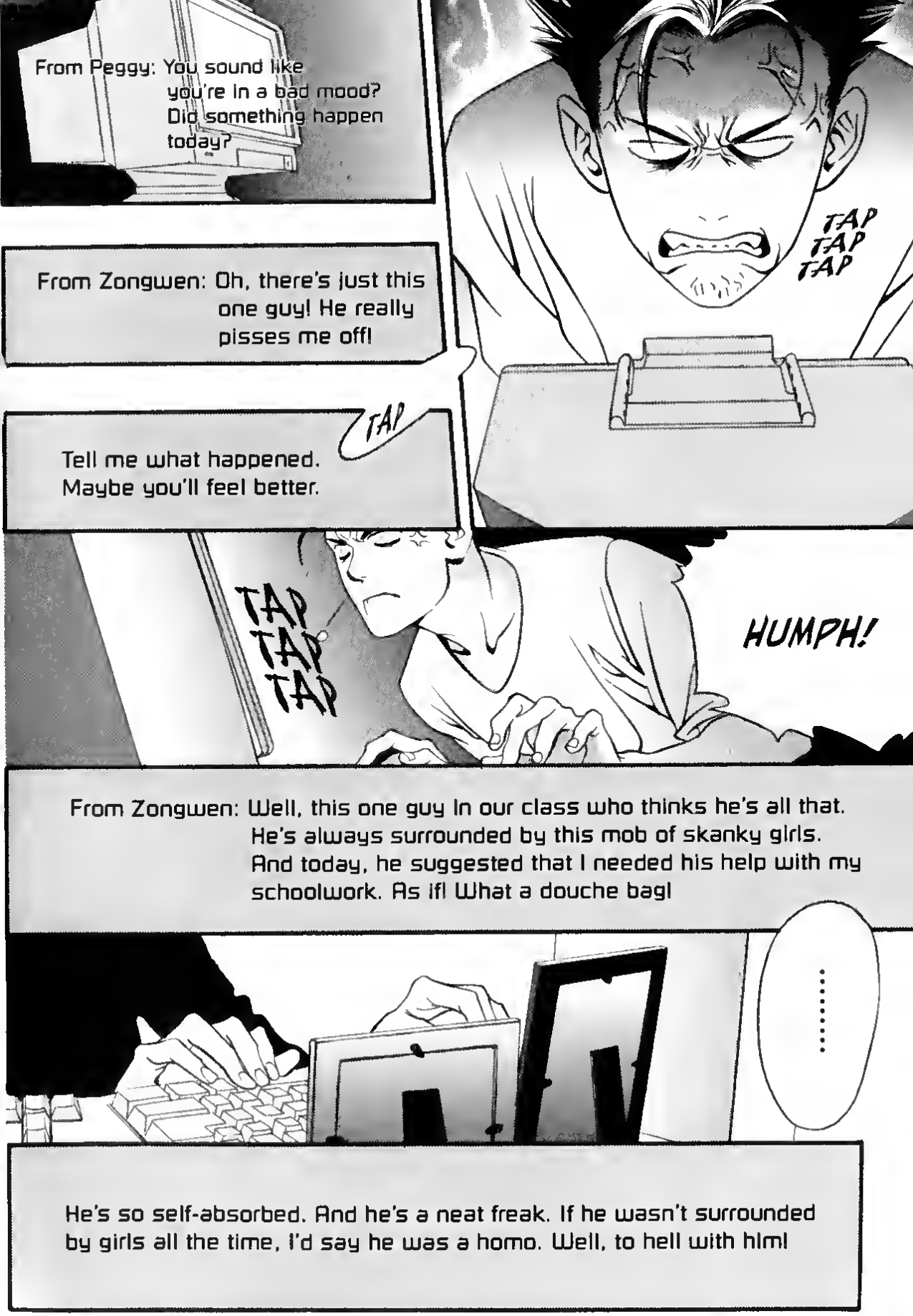
HA...

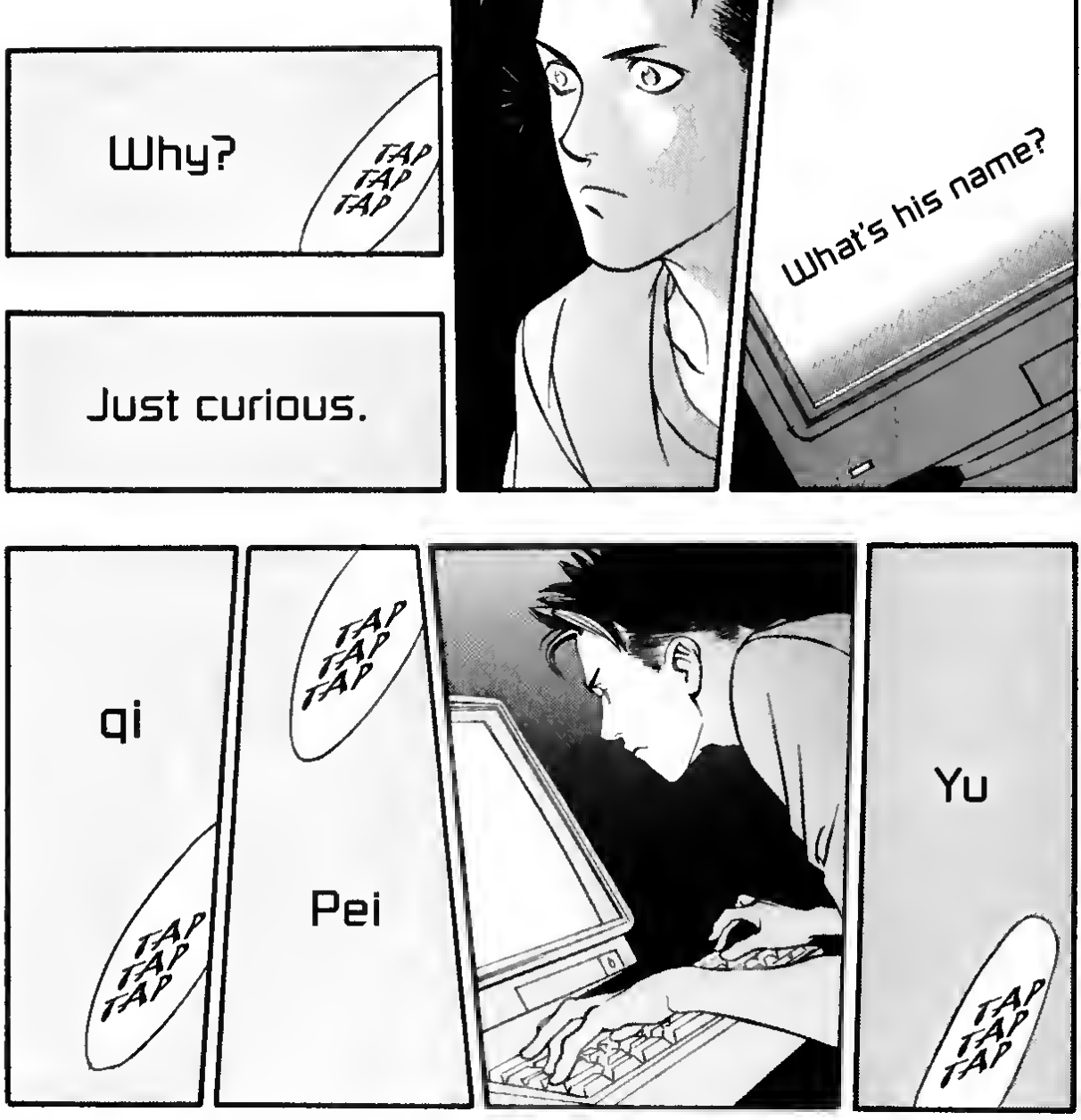
NOTE BOOK
English
Peiqi Yu

WHAT?

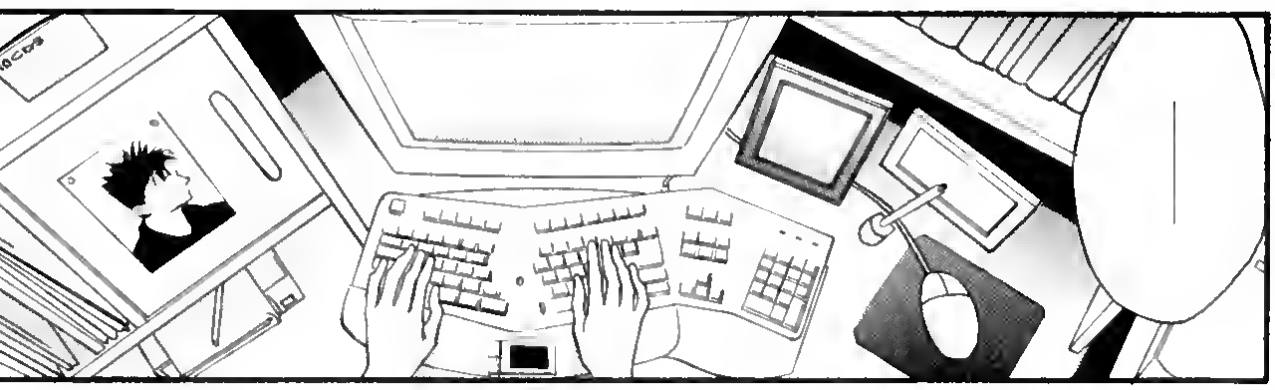
YOUR GRADES HAVE BEEN SLIPPING THIS SEMESTER.
AS THE TEACHING ASSISTANT FOR THIS CLASS, IT'S MY JOB TO HELP YOU OUT.
WHY THE HELL WOULD I WANT TO DO THAT?
YOU CAN BORROW MY NOTES IF YOU WANT.

HEY, PINEAPPLE HEAD, MAYBE YOU SHOULD JUST SAY THANK YOU?
I'M A MONG, AND YOU'RE A FREAKING GENIUS?
YOU'RE LUCKY SOMEONE LIKE HIM IS WILLING TO HELP SOMEONE LIKE YOU.
WHAT THE HELL IS HE IMPLYING?!
IF THERE'S ANYTHING YOU NEED HELP WITH, JUST LET ME KNOW.
TROLL? LOOKED IN THE MIRROR LATELY, SHREK?
YOU'RE ALL A BUNCH OF WEEDS!
BLAH BLAH
BLAH BLAH
WHO THE HELL ASKED YOU, YOU TROLL?!
SMACK
GOD-DAMN IT!
THAT'S FUNNY COMING FROM SHITBAGS LIKE YOU!
WE MAY BE WEEDS, BUT YOU'RE FERTILIZER!
TOTALLY RUINED MY MOOD!


From Peggy: You sound like you're in a bad mood? Did something happen today?
From Zongwen: Oh, there's just this one guy! He really pisses me off!
TAP TAP TAP
Tell me what happened. Maybe you'll feel better.
TAP
TAP TAP TAP
HUMPH!
From Zongwen: Well, this one guy in our class who thinks he's all that. He's always surrounded by this mob of skanky girls. And today, he suggested that I needed his help with my schoolwork. As if! What a douche bag!
.....
He's so self-absorbed. And he's a neat freak. If he wasn't surrounded by girls all the time, I'd say he was a homo. Well, to hell with him!



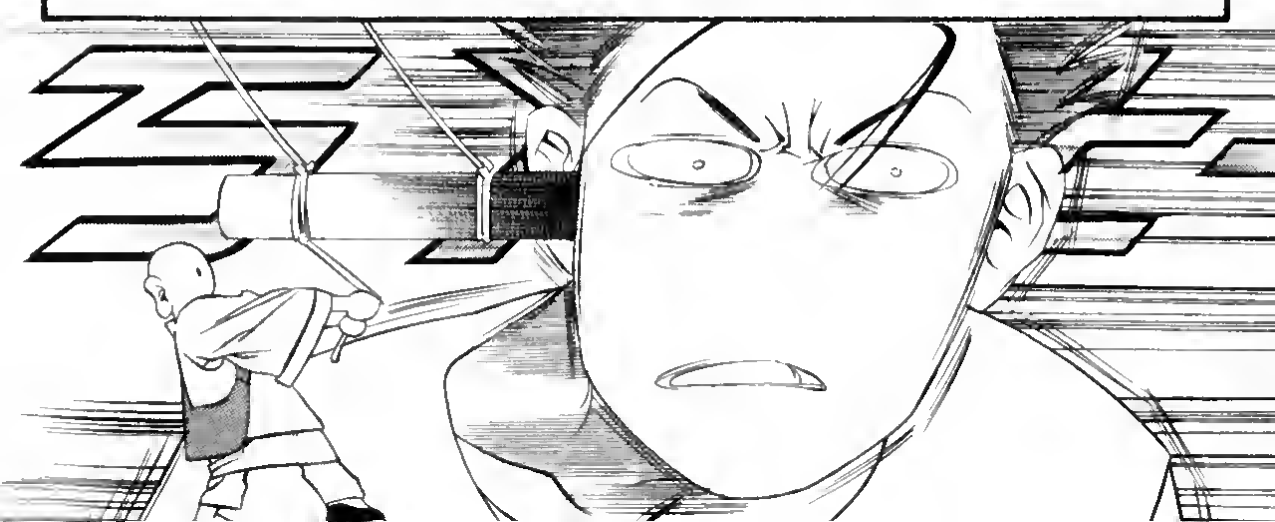
From Zongwen: His name even sounds gay!



From Zongwen: Peggy?

From Peggy: Peiqi Yu? That's strange! I know him, too.

But I always thought he was a nice guy. He's a bit shy, so I guess he could come off as arrogant. But I don't think he means it.



Well, we're just friends. But I haven't talked to hi in a whlle.
UNBELIEVABLE!
WHAT?! SHE KNOWS HIM? AND SHE'S DEFENDING HIM?
HOW DO YOU KNOW HIM?
TAP TAP TAP
From Zongwen: *Just* friends???
From Peggy: So, guess what? I went to SOGO department store yesterday and bought a dolphin-shaped bookmark. It's super cute! I just scanned it. Do you want me to send it to you?
From Zongwen: Huh? Sure, whatever.
WHIRRR
Well, what do you think?
From Zongwen: Swell.
WHIRRR

NO WAY!
JUST FRIENDS...
I HAVEN'T HAD A FIRST KISS YET.
SO, HOW OLD WERE YOU WHEN YOU HAD YOUR FIRST KISS?
HEY, CAN I SEE YOUR NOTES? WOW, YOU WENT BACK AND HIGHLIGHTED EVERYTHING IMPORTANT!
WHAT A WEIRD COINCIDENCE... THEY KNOW EACH OTHER.
THERE HAS TO BE MORE TO IT.

IT'S SOOOO CUTE!
OH, LOOK, A DOLPHIN!
HUH?
WHERE'D YOU GET THAT BOOKMARK?
HEY, WHAT'S THIS?
!
YOU KNOW WHAT I'M TALKING ABOUT!
HEY. WHERE DID YOU GET THIS?
GET WHAT?

HEY, CUT IT OUT! THAT HURTS!
I GOT IT FROM A FRIEND.
WHERE DID YOU GET IT?!
WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU?
TEACHER!
HEY! GET OFF OF HIM! BREAK IT UP!
I SEE. JUST A FRIEND, RIGHT?
A FRIEND, HUH?
I WILL NOT TOLERATE THIS KIND OF BEHAVIOR!
TO THE OFFICE! NOW!

...BUT LEAVE PEGGY ALONE!
MESS WITH WHATEVER GIRL YOU WANT...
YOU GOT THAT FROM PEGGY, DIDN'T YOU?
!
...YOU'LL BE SORRY.
OR I PROMISE...
Oh!
ASS-HOLE!
I'M SORRY. I WAS ONLY TRYING TO HELP.
DON'T TOUCH ME!
ARE YOU OKAY?

I GOT A CALL FROM YOUR TEACHER!
ZONGWEN, I AM VERY DISAPPOINTED!
ARE YOU LISTENING TO ME?
YOU'RE FIGHTING AGAIN!
ZONGWEN!
WHY WOULD PEGGY LIE? I DON'T UNDER-STAND.

WHAT IF HE'S SEDUCED HER?
MAYBE PEIQI'S THREATENING HER.
I TRUSTED HER. SHE'S NOT THE TYPE TO LIE. MAYBE SHE'S AFRAID OF SOMETHING, AND SHE'S HIDING IT TO PROTECT ME.
!
THAT SICK BASTARD!
HA HA HA! YOU'RE MINE!
PEGGY!
HELP!
.....
DAMMIT! WHY ISN'T SHE ANSWERING? WHERE COULD SHE BE?

Peggy! Please write back when you get this!
SHOULD I REPLY?
OH, JESUS. WHAT SHOULD I DO, NOW?
HEY, DICKHEAD. GIMME YOUR LUNCH MONEY.
...IF IT WEREN'T FOR THAT FIRST DAY...
HOLD IT, BUDDY!
HUH? WHAT?
LOOKS LIKE YOU STEPPED IN SOME SHIT.

HE'S...
JUST HIT HIM NEXT TIME, WHY DON'T YOU?
OW!
The first day of school, and already you're suspended. You should be ashamed!
Hall Monitor
YOU THERE! WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING?
HE'S AMAZING!

THADUMP
THADUMP
THADUMP
HUH?
AND THEN.
...WE ENDED UP IN THE SAME CLASS.
CLASS, THIS IS ZONGWEN CHEN. HE'LL BE JOINING US.
Zongwen Chen

...HE'D PROBABLY JUST HIT ME LIKE HE DID THAT OTHER GUY.
I WANTED TO TELL HIM. I WANTED TO...BUT...
.....
PEIQI, THIS IS FOR YOU!
HE'D COMPLETELY FORGOTTEN ABOUT ME.

UNTIL...
I, ZONGWEN CHEN, AM FINALLY ON MYSPACE.
EXTRA, EXTRA, READ ALL ABOUT IT!
HERE'S MY PAGE! ALL LADIES ARE WELCOME!
HE HATES ME NOW!
HUH?

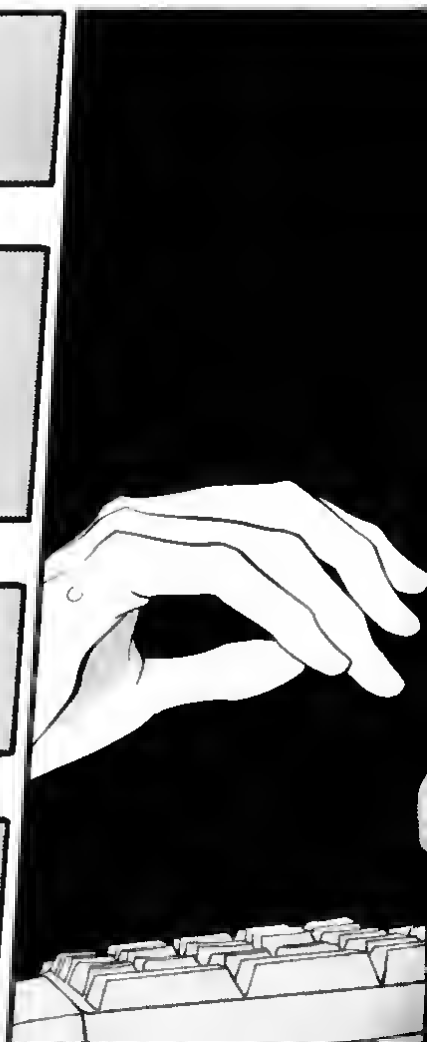
BUT IF I WROTE TO HIM...
!!
...BUT THAT JUST MADE EVERYTHING WORSE.
AND THEN FINALLY, I WORKED UP THE NERVE TO TALK TO ZONGWEN...
I HATED MYSELF. STARTING THINGS OFF WITH A LIE...
HIDING IN THE ANONYMITY OF E-MAIL AND INSTANT MESSAGING.
Still afraid of getting beaten up.
SHOULD I USE MY REAL NAME?
RIGHT. I CAN USE "PEGGY"!
SO, NOW I'M IN THIS MESS.
AND I DON'T KNOW HOW MUCH LONGER I CAN KEEP UP THE CHARADE.

Peggy: Hi, Zongwen.

Zongwen: Oh, thank god, you're there! What happened? I thought we were supposed to chat today.

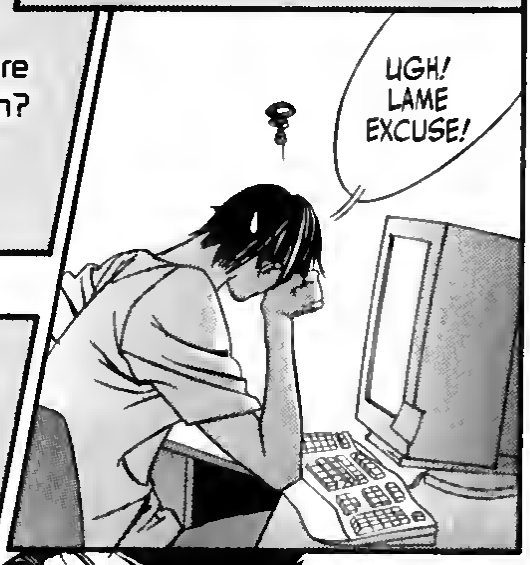
Peggy: Yeah, something came up.

Zongwen: What?



My mother's sick.

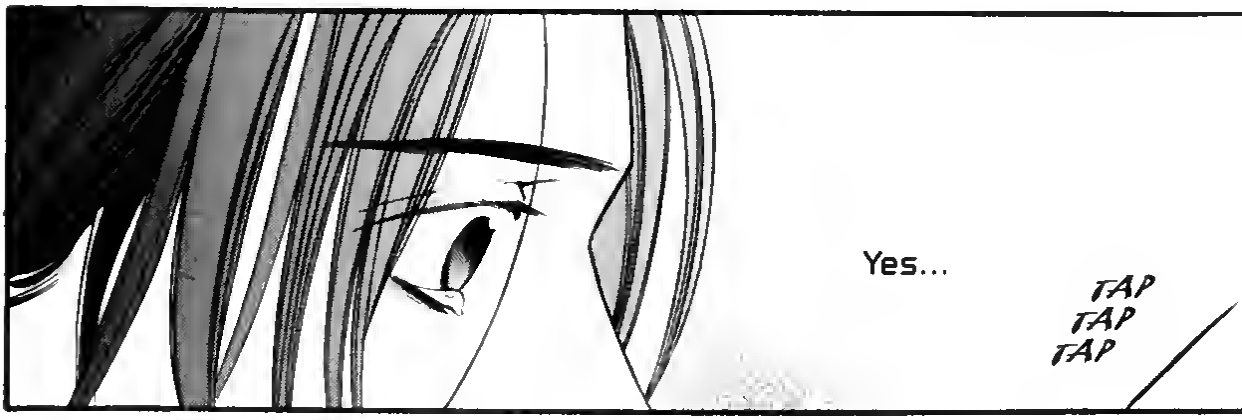
Zongwen: Are you sure you're okay. Is there something I can help you with? Is someone bothering you?

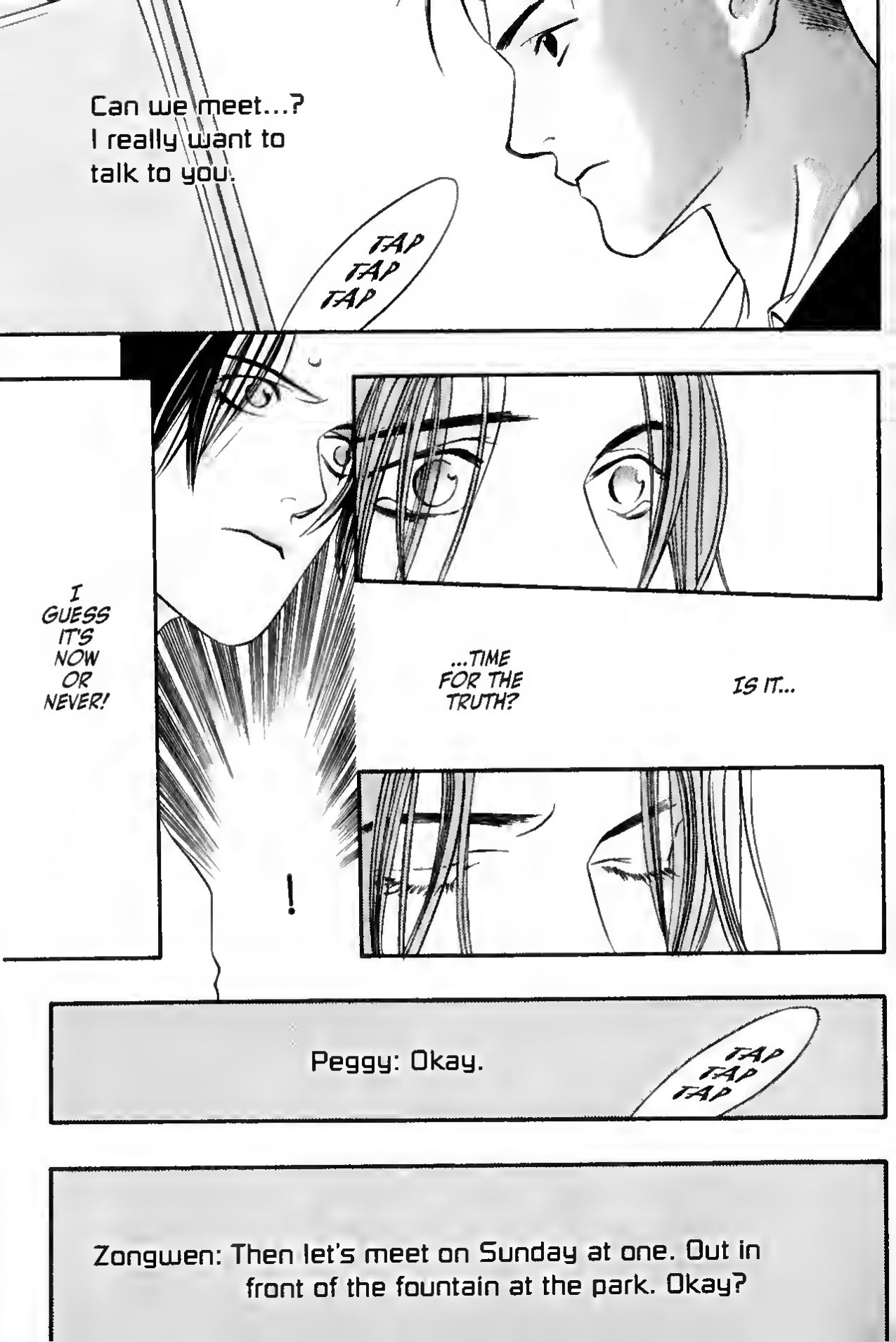


Peggy: No. It's nothing I can talk about.

Does it have something to do with Peiqi?

From Zongwen: Do you still like me?




Can we meet...? I really want to talk to you.
TAP TAP TAP
I GUESS IT'S NOW OR NEVER!
...TIME FOR THE TRUTH?
IS IT...
!
Peggy: Okay.
TAP TAP TAP
Zongwen: Then let's meet on Sunday at one. Out in front of the fountain at the park. Okay?

Peggy: Okay. See you there!
Deep breath
YES!
FINALLY! WE'RE GOING TO MEET FACE-TO-FACE.
I KNEW HE WAS UP TO SOMETHING.
...SHE DIDN'T SEEM VERY HAPPY ABOUT IT. SOMETHING WAS WRONG.
IT MUST HAVE SOMETHING TO DO WITH PEIQI YU.
BUT...
AND I'LL FINALLY TELL HER HOW I REALLY FEEL ABOUT HER.

I'M GOING TO HAVE TO STRAIGHTEN THIS OUT BEFORE WE MEET!
HEY!
WE NEED TO TALK. OUTSIDE.
HUH? WHY?
ARE YOU COMING OR NOT?
UH, I GUESS.

RING
RING
COULD HE KNOW?
I'M SURPRISED YOU DIDN'T BRING YOUR WHOLE ENTOURAGE.
HE CAN'T KNOW, CAN HE...?
HOW DOES IT FEEL TO BE ALONE?
!

WHAT DO YOU WANT FROM ME?
I KNOW YOU'RE AFTER PEGGY.
LISTEN, I'M NOT A DOG LIKE YOU. I REALLY CARE ABOUT HER.
DON'T PLAY GAMES WITH ME.
WHAT?
I TOLD YOU NOT TO PLAY GAMES WITH ME, YOU SHITHEAD!
SHE'S WAY TOO GOOD FOR SOMEONE LIKE YOU.
NO, YOU'VE GOT IT ALL WRONG. IT ISN'T LIKE THAT.

CLINT
THAT PUPPY DOG LOOK OF YOURS MAY WORK ON THE GIRLS, BUT IT MAKES ME WANT TO PUKE!
WHERE DID YOU...?
Peggy Love

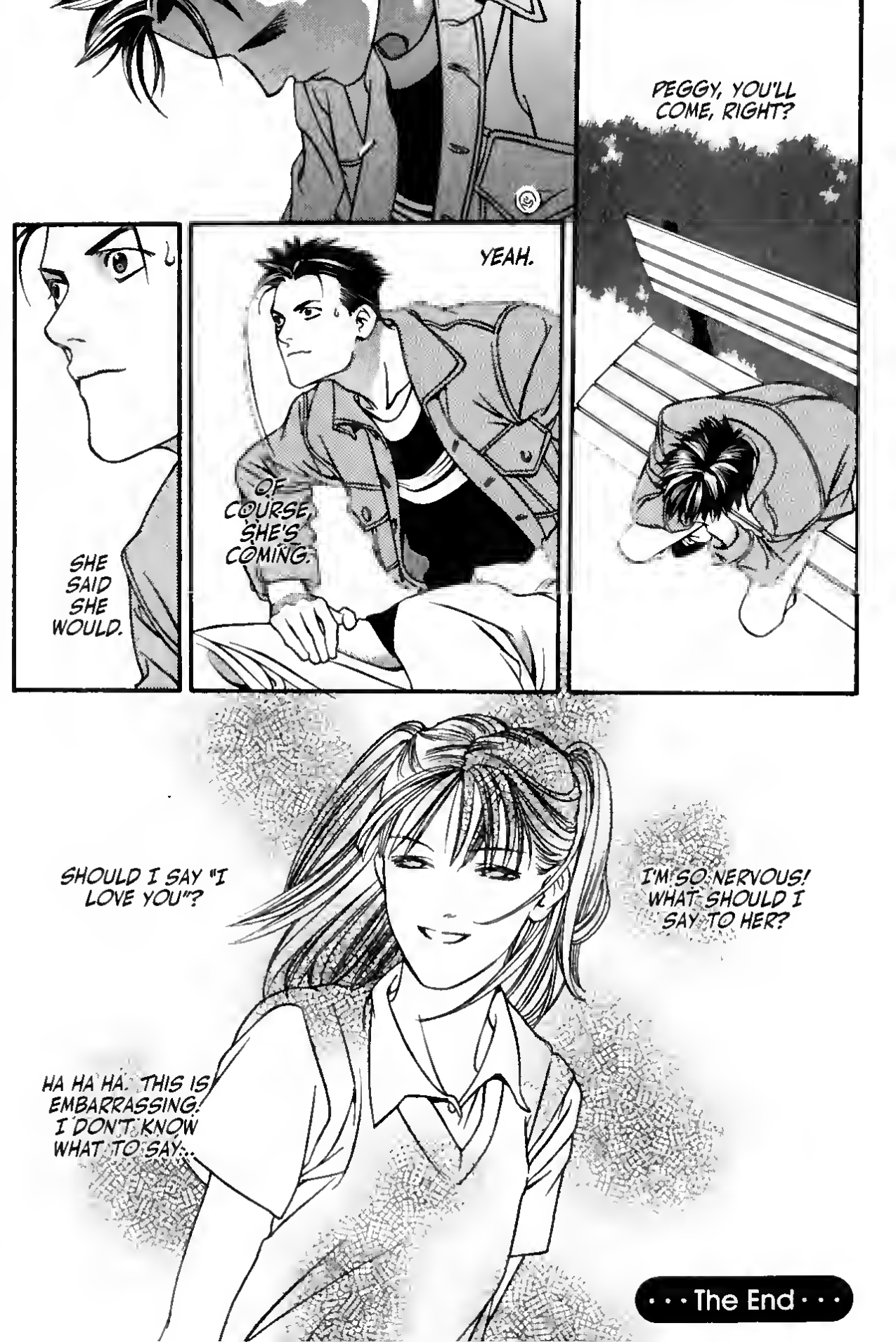
NO, WAIT! IT'S NOT LIKE THAT!
YOU...
...TOUCHED HER?!
THWACK

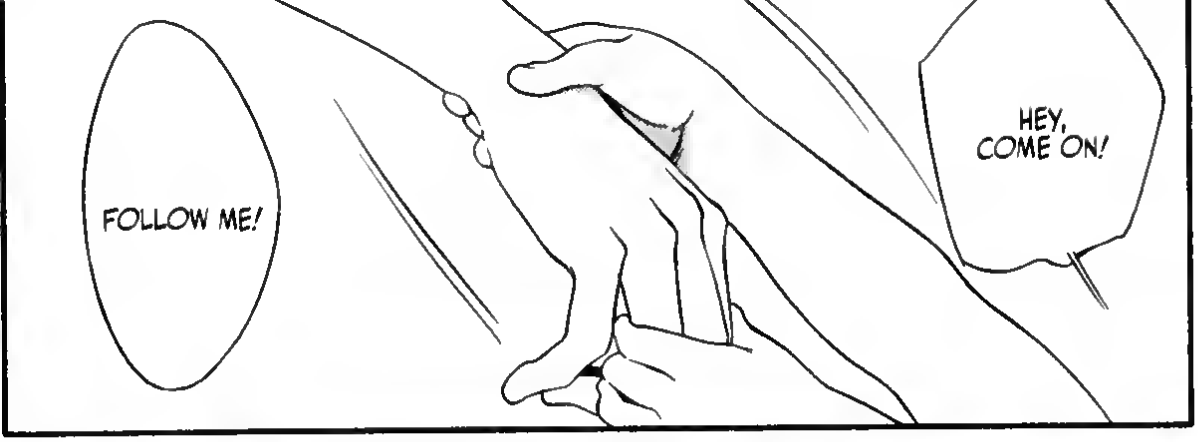
YOU MOTHER FU--!
WHAT DID YOU DO TO HER?!
THIS IS FOR PEGGY!

UGH!
PUNISHMENT...
...I AM A COWARD.
I WAS SELFISH.
I LIED TO ZONGWEN.
I'M BEING PUNISHED.
AND...

HA HA HA!
I'LL GET THE TRUTH FROM PEGGY TODAY. I'LL TELL HER I TOOK CARE OF HIM.
GOTCHA! YOU'RE IT NOW.
I'LL HAND HER BACK HER NECKLACE IN PERSON AND TELL HER HOW I FEEL.

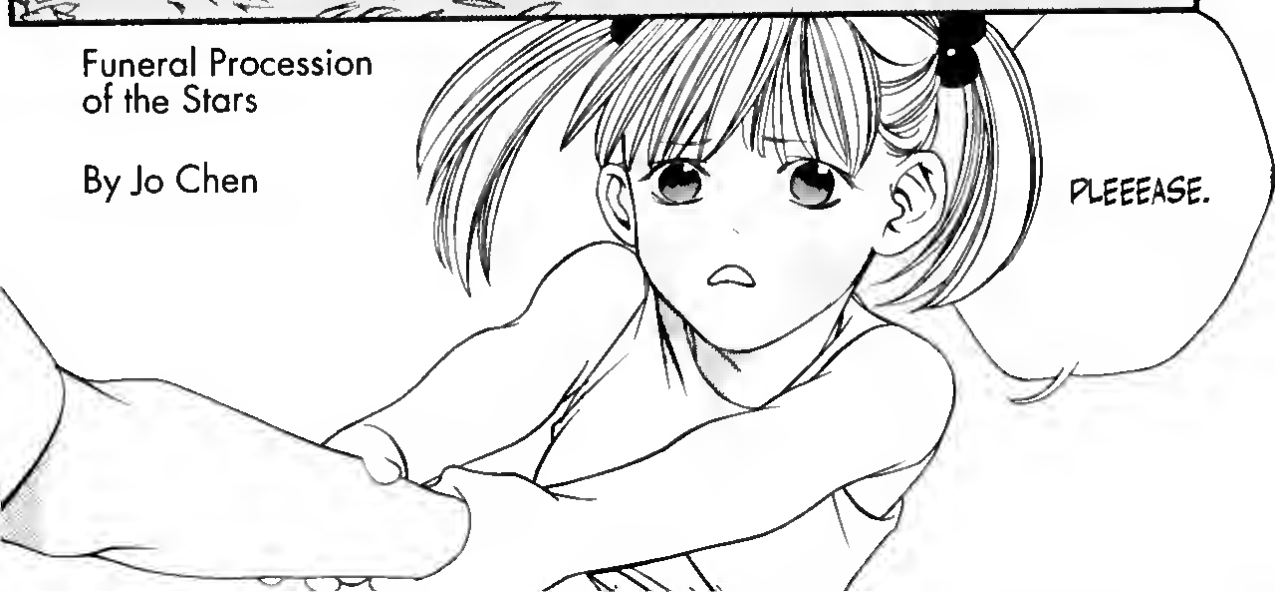
Let's go home...
.....
SHE'S LATE...
IT CAN'T BE BECAUSE OF PEIQI, CAN IT?
PEGGY!


PEGGY, YOU'LL COME, RIGHT?
YEAH.
OF COURSE, SHE'S COMING.
SHE SAID SHE WOULD.
SHOULD I SAY "I LOVE YOU"?
I'M SO NERVOUS! WHAT SHOULD I SAY TO HER?
HA HA HA. THIS IS EMBARRASSING. I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY...
· · · The End · · ·



Funeral Procession of the Stars

By Jo Chen



LOOK, LOOK, I BROUGHT A FRIEND!
OH, HELLO THERE, LULU.
GRAND-MA!
IT'S THE BOY WHO PLAYS WITH ME!
WHO IS IT?
COME AND MEET HIM.
ALL RIGHT.
COME INSIDE!
HEY, WHY ARE YOU STANDING IN THE DOOR-WAY?
?

STAY AWAY FROM MY GRAND-DAUGHTER!
GET OUT!
GET OUT OF HERE!
HE STOOD THERE, HANGING HIS HEAD. SILENT. SAD.
THAT WAS THE LAST TIME I SAW HIM.
GRANDMA?
OUT!
WHY?
HUH?
BUT HE'S JUST...

星星的葬列
Funeral Procession of the Stars
Jo Chen

IT MAKES HER LOOK STRANGE.
WHY ALL THE MAKEUP AROUND HER EYES?
THAT'S ZHENG XIONG'S DAUGHTER.
REALLY? SHE'S REALLY GROWN!
I HARDLY RECOGNIZE HER.
WHO IS SHE?
HER FAMILY JUST CAME BACK FROM THE UK.
I SUPPOSE THIS IS WHAT IS MEANT BY "GENERATION X."
I HATE THEIR STARES AND JUDG-MENTS.
LULU!
SHH!
WELL, OUR DAUGHTER IS MUCH MORE RESPECT-ABLE.
THIS IS WHY I DIDN'T WANT TO COME BACK!
I HATE THIS!

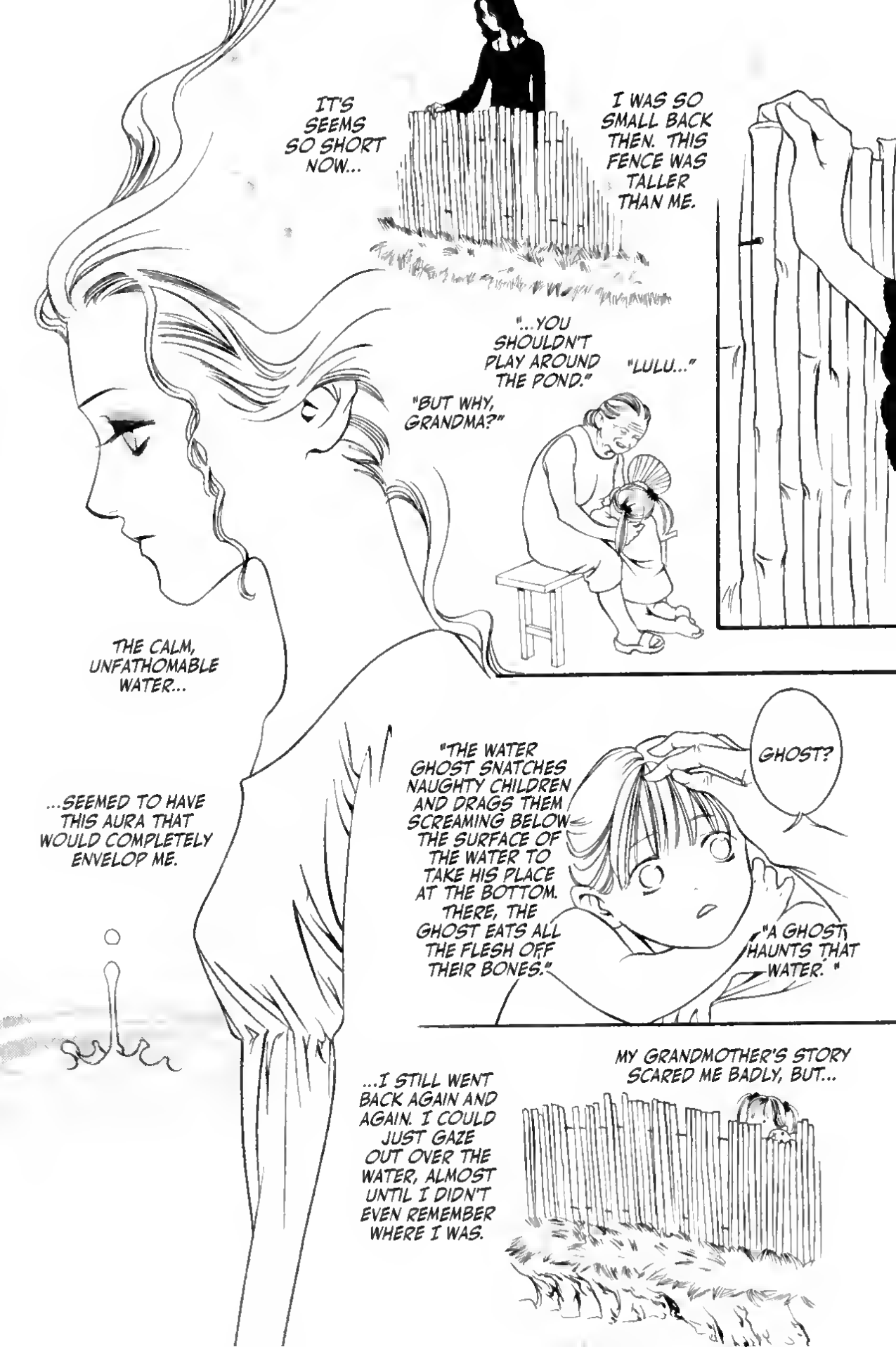
MY GRANDMOTHER PASSED AWAY. I USED TO VISIT HER IN THE COUNTRY WHEN I WAS A CHILD.
I REMEMBER HER BEING SO KIND AND GENTLE.
ALL SHE LEFT BEHIND WAS HER OLD HOUSE...
...AND AN UNRULY BAMBOO PATCH.

AS SOON AS MY FATHER HEARD SHE'D DIED, HE DECIDED TO MOVE THE FAMILY ALL THE WAY BACK TO TAIWAN. WE HADN'T BEEN BACK IN YEARS.
IT'S NOT UP TO YOU. WE'RE LEAVING.
I DIDN'T EVEN HAVE TIME TO SAY GOOD-BYE TO MY FRIENDS.
I DON'T WANT TO LEAVE!
WHAT?
WE'RE MOVING BACK TO TAIWAN?
...THE REAL REASON THEY WANTED TO MOVE.
AND MY FRIENDS?
IT'S TAKEN CARE OF.
WHAT ABOUT SCHOOL? I CAN'T JUST DISAP-PEAR!
OF COURSE, I KNEW...
WHY? I DON'T WANT TO START OVER AGAIN!
YOU CAN MAKE NEW ONES.
BUT IN ENGLAND, THEY NEVER QUITE FIT IN. THEY WERE DESPERATE FOR ANY EXCUSE TO RETURN.
SO BE GRATEFUL FOR ONCE AND INSTEAD OF ARGUING. START PACKING YOUR BAGS.
LOOK AT YOURSELF! YOU'RE A DISGRACE.
WE'RE DOING THIS FOR YOU!
WHEN THEY LEFT TAIWAN, IT WAS BECAUSE THEY THOUGHT THEY COULD DO BETTER THAN THE REST OF THE FAMILY.

YOU'LL REGRET THIS!
YOU HEAR THAT? I'M GOING TO KILL MYSELF. I'LL HANG MYSELF RIGHT HERE AND NOW. AND YOU GET TO CLEAN UP THE MESS!
MAYBE YOU'D GIVE A SHIT IF I KILLED MYSELF! WOULD THAT MAKE YOU FEEL BAD?
YOU'RE NOTHING BUT SELFISH, ARROGANT DICTATORS.
SERIOUSLY? DOING THIS FOR ME? DON'T USE ME TO COVER UP YOUR OWN STUPID MISTAKES.
OH...
OH, YEAH. YOU CAN'T EXACTLY...
...HANG YOURSELF FROM BAMBOO TREES.

...WE COULD SEE...
AT THE TOP...
WE'D RUN UP THE HILLS TOGETHER.
I REMEMBER THIS PLACE. I USED TO COME HERE WITH MY FRIENDS.
...THE OLD VILLAGE TEMPLE.
WE COULD SEE...
GO AND APOLOGIZE TO THE TEMPLE SPIRIT. YOU SHOULDN'T STEAL FROM HIM. IT IS VERY DISRESPECTFUL!
OH, LULU!
I USED TO SNEAK IN AND EAT THE FOOD LEFT AS OFFERINGS. I'D REPLACE THE FOOD WITH ROCKS. WHEN GRANDMA FOUND OUT, SHE SCOLDED ME GOOD.
HOW COME?
IT LOOKS EXACTLY THE SAME!
THE ALTER. THERE IT IS.

IF I LEAVE THE PATH AND WALK TOWARD THE NORTH...
...THROUGH THE TREES, WILL I FIND...?
HMM... I WONDER.
YES! THE POND.

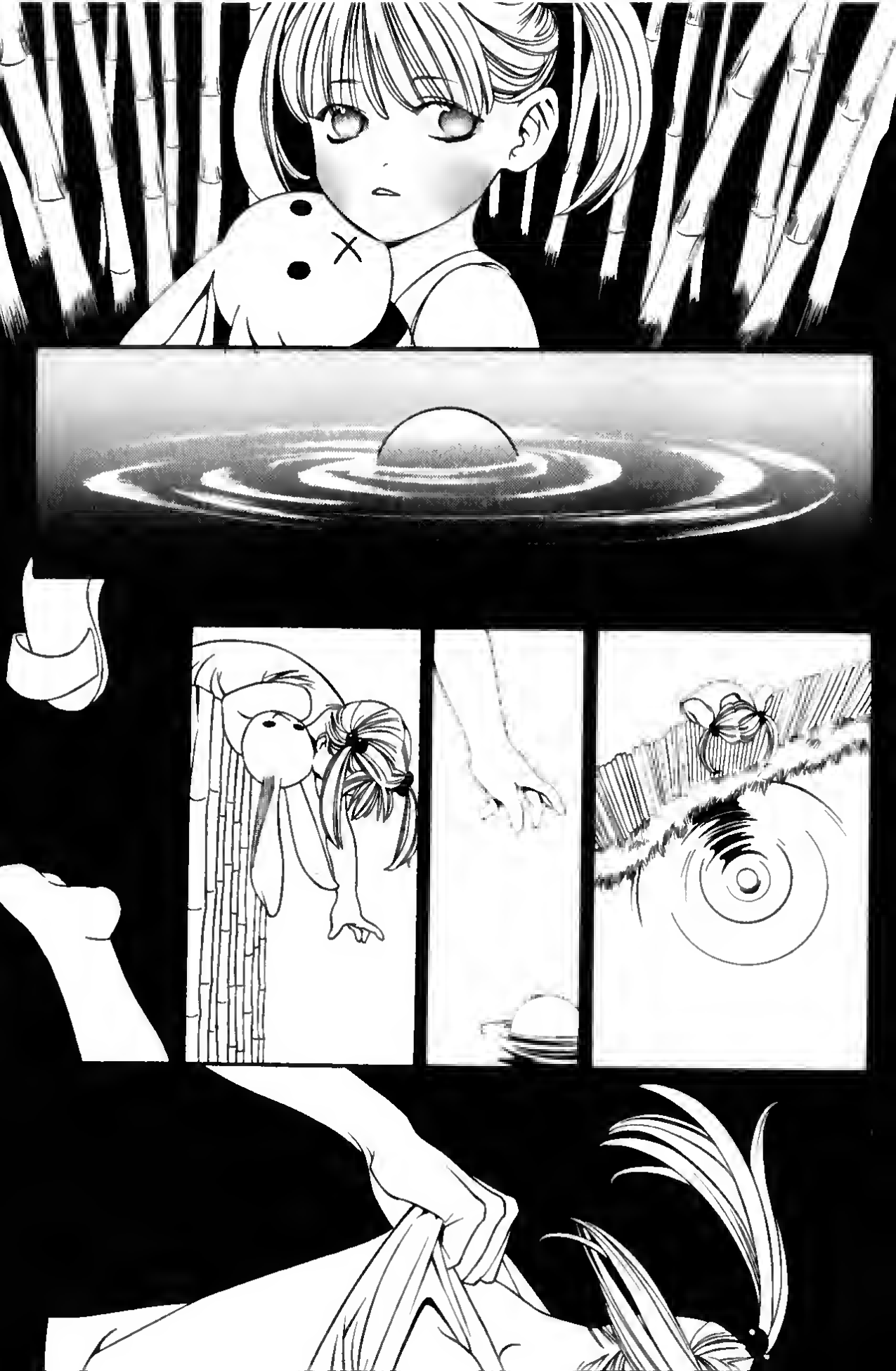

IT'S SEEMS SO SHORT NOW...
I WAS SO SMALL BACK THEN. THIS FENCE WAS TALLER THAN ME.
"...YOU SHOULDN'T PLAY AROUND THE POND."
"LULU..."
"BUT WHY, GRANDMA?"
THE CALM, UNFATHOMABLE WATER...
...SEEMED TO HAVE THIS AURA THAT WOULD COMPLETELY ENVELOP ME.
"THE WATER GHOST SNATCHES NAUGHTY CHILDREN AND DRAGS THEM SCREAMING BELOW THE SURFACE OF THE WATER TO TAKE HIS PLACE AT THE BOTTOM. THERE, THE GHOST EATS ALL THE FLESH OFF THEIR BONES."
GHOST?
"A GHOST HAUNTS THAT WATER."
MY GRANDMOTHER'S STORY SCARED ME BADLY, BUT...
...I STILL WENT BACK AGAIN AND AGAIN. I COULD JUST GAZE OUT OVER THE WATER, ALMOST UNTIL I DIDN'T EVEN REMEMBER WHERE I WAS.

...THE DARK WATERS SEEMED TO DEVOUR ALL THE STARS.
ESPECIALLY DURING HOT SUMMER NIGHTS...
NO ONE WILL EVER DECIDE MY FATE FOR ME AGAIN!
THIS IS WHERE I'LL DO IT.
THIS POND!
PERFECT.
WHO'S THERE?
HEY, DON'T FALL!
OR ELSE YOUR PARENTS WILL BE VERY SAD.

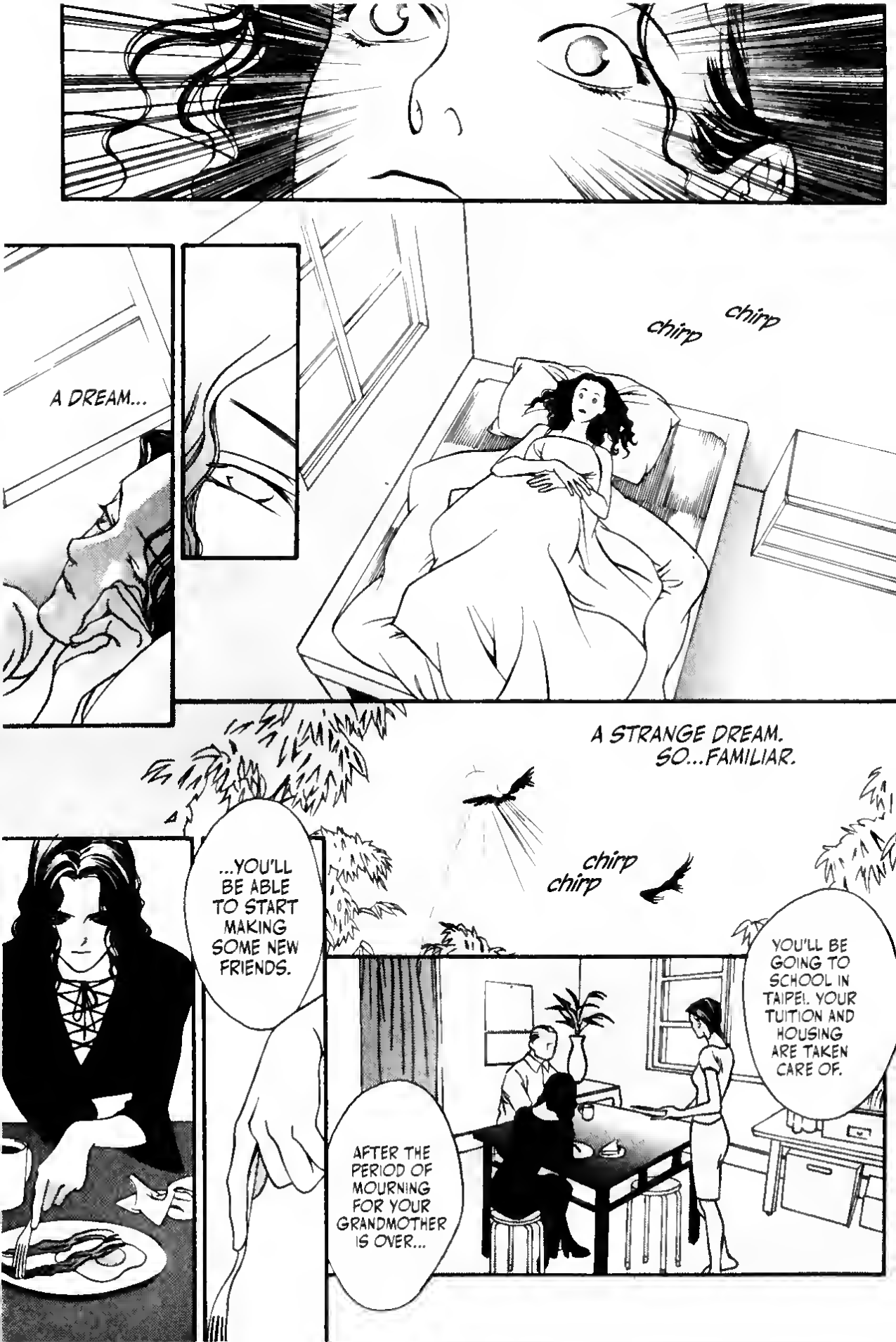
SHE'S SLEEPING?
YES.
SHE WENT TO THE POND TODAY.
REALLY? WHAT WAS SHE DOING THERE?
SHE'S NOT A CHILD ANYMORE...
...BUT I STILL WORRY ABOUT HER.

STARS...
THE POND--IT'S SO BLACK, LIKE A BLACK HOLE...
...PULLING ME IN.

PROMISE TO WAIT FOR ME!
I'LL COME BACK--I PROMISE!



CAREFUL! DON'T FALL IN...
...OR ELSE YOUR PARENTS WILL BE VERY SAD.


A DREAM...
chirp
chirp
A STRANGE DREAM.
SO...FAMILIAR.
chirp
chirp
...YOU'LL BE ABLE TO START MAKING SOME NEW FRIENDS.
AFTER THE PERIOD OF MOURNING FOR YOUR GRANDMOTHER IS OVER...
YOU'LL BE GOING TO SCHOOL IN TAIPEI. YOUR TUITION AND HOUSING ARE TAKEN CARE OF.

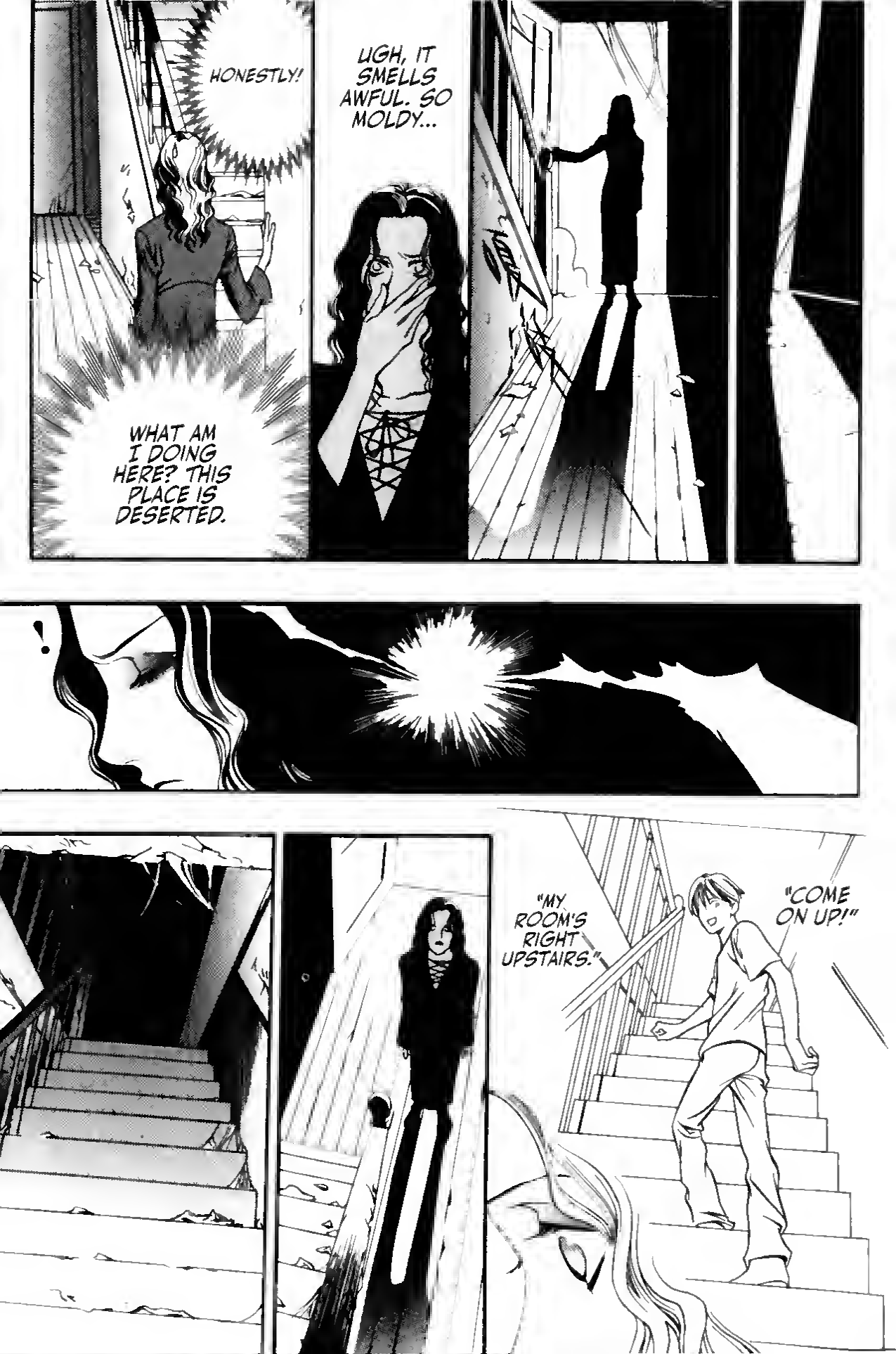
I CAN'T STOP THINKING ABOUT THE DREAM.
LU!
WHAT DO THEY HAVE TO DO WITH EACH OTHER?
I WONDER... THAT BOY, AND THE HOUSE.
ARE YOU EVEN LISTEN-ING?
LU!
DOES IT MATTER?
ARE YOU?
WATCH YOUR MOUTH!
NEVER ONCE HAVE YOU CONSIDERED HOW I FEEL!
YOU ONLY THINK ABOUT YOUR-SELVES.
LU!
LISTEN, DON'T LISTEN. I HAVE TO OBEY EITHER WAY, RIGHT?
DOES IT EVEN MAKE A DIFFERENCE IF I LISTEN OR NOT?
AND LOOK AT YOU! YOU AND YOUR FRIENDS DRESS LIKE A BUNCH OF FREAKS!
YOU WASTE YOUR TIME DOING NOTHING!
YOU'RE STILL A CHILD. YOU'RE NOT EVEN MATURE ENOUGH TO KNOW WHAT'S GOOD FOR YOU.

HOW DARE YOU TALK ABOUT MY FRIENDS LIKE THAT?!
BUNCH OF LAZY GOOD-FOR-NOTHINGS!
AND DON'T EVEN GET ME STARTED ON YOUR FRIENDS.
WHEN YOU GET OLDER, YOU'LL SEE WE'RE DOING THIS FOR YOU!
THEY...!
HUH?
ISN'T THAT...?

IT CAN'T BE...
Wow, I found a quarter!
Yippee, I can go to the arcade now!
NO...
LULU?
DAD.
IS THERE A COLONIAL-STYLE HOUSE AROUND HERE?
ORU
HERE, LET ME CLEAN THIS UP.
WHY?
IS THERE?
I DON'T KNOW.
LIAR!

IT'S OVER NEAR THE POND.
A WESTERNER HOUSE? YES, THERE IS.
A COLONIAL-STYLE HOUSE? I DON'T KNOW.
THEY'RE HIDING SOMETHING.
...YOU REALLY SHOULD STAY AWAY FROM THERE.
BUT IF YOU DON'T MIND MY SAYING...
BUT WHAT IS IT...
I'VE BEEN THERE BEFORE!
I KNEW IT.
...WANT TO RETURN?
...THAT MAKES ME!..

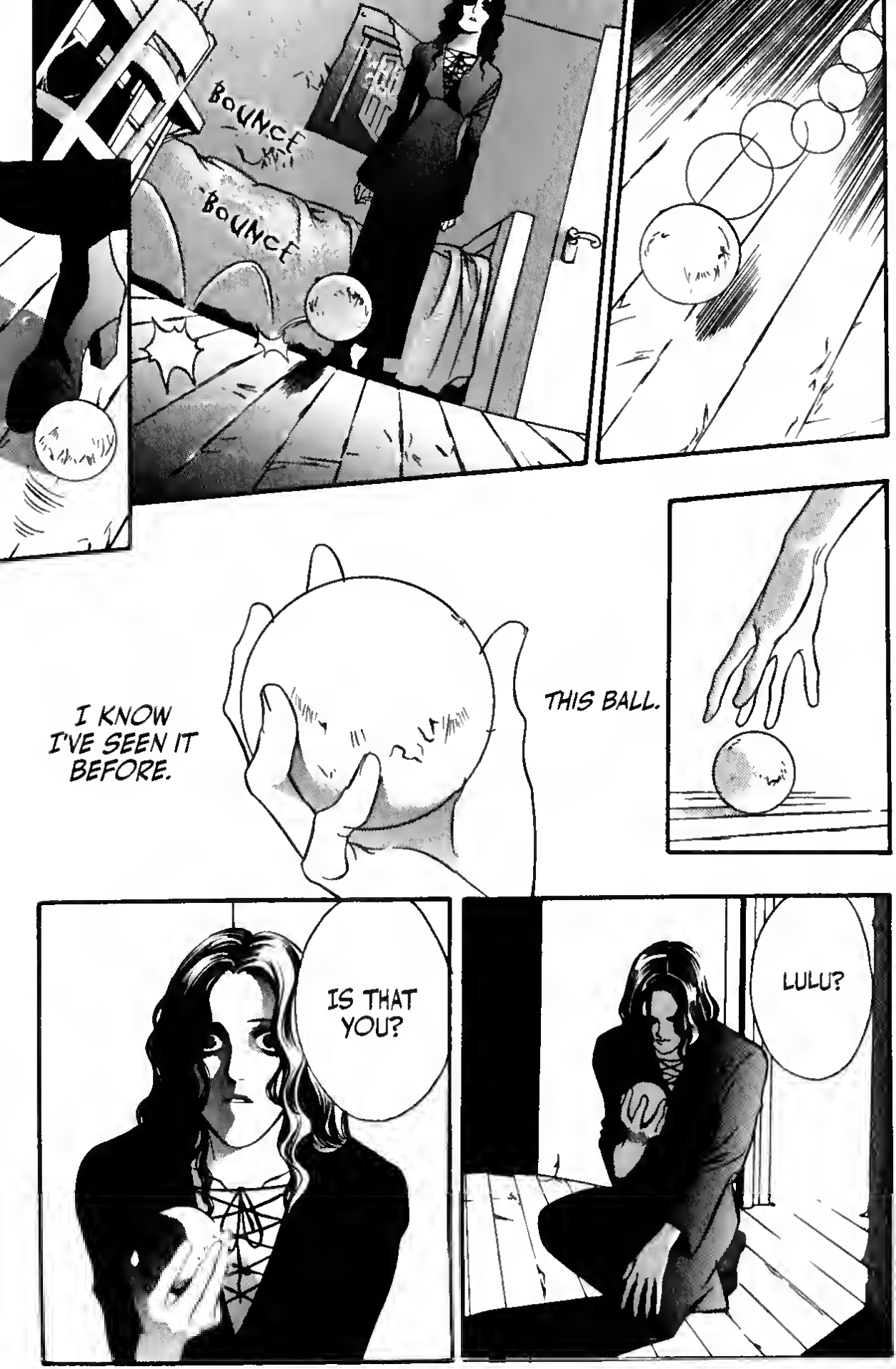
THE WINDOWS...
THEY'RE ALL BOARDED UP.


HONESTLY!
UGH, IT SMELLS AWFUL. SO MOLDY...
WHAT AM I DOING HERE? THIS PLACE IS DESERTED.
!
"MY ROOM'S RIGHT UPSTAIRS."
"COME ON UP!"

OH, HELLO.
MRS. LIN!
"IT'S CALLED A RECORD ALBUM. DO YOU WANT TO LISTEN TO IT?"
"WHAT'S THIS?"
ANYWAY, I THOUGHT YOU SHOULD KNOW--YOUR DAUGHTER WAS LOOKING FOR THAT HOUSE BY THE POND.
I'M SURPRISED YOU'RE STILL HERE.
NOT ONLY THAT...
DO YOU THINK SHE'S ALL RIGHT?
...I THINK SHE'S HEADED THERE NOW.

"OVER HERE!"
THIS PLACE LOOKS LIKE IT'S BEEN EMPTY FOR MORE THAN A DECADE.
THE WOOD IS SO ROTTEN AND SOFT.
I HOPE THE FLOORS HOLD.

THE RECORD... THIS POSTER...!
STILL HERE!!!
BOUNCE
WHAT WAS THAT?
BOUNCE
HUH?
THUMP


BOUNCE
BOUNCE
I KNOW I'VE SEEN IT BEFORE.
THIS BALL.
IS THAT YOU?
LULU?

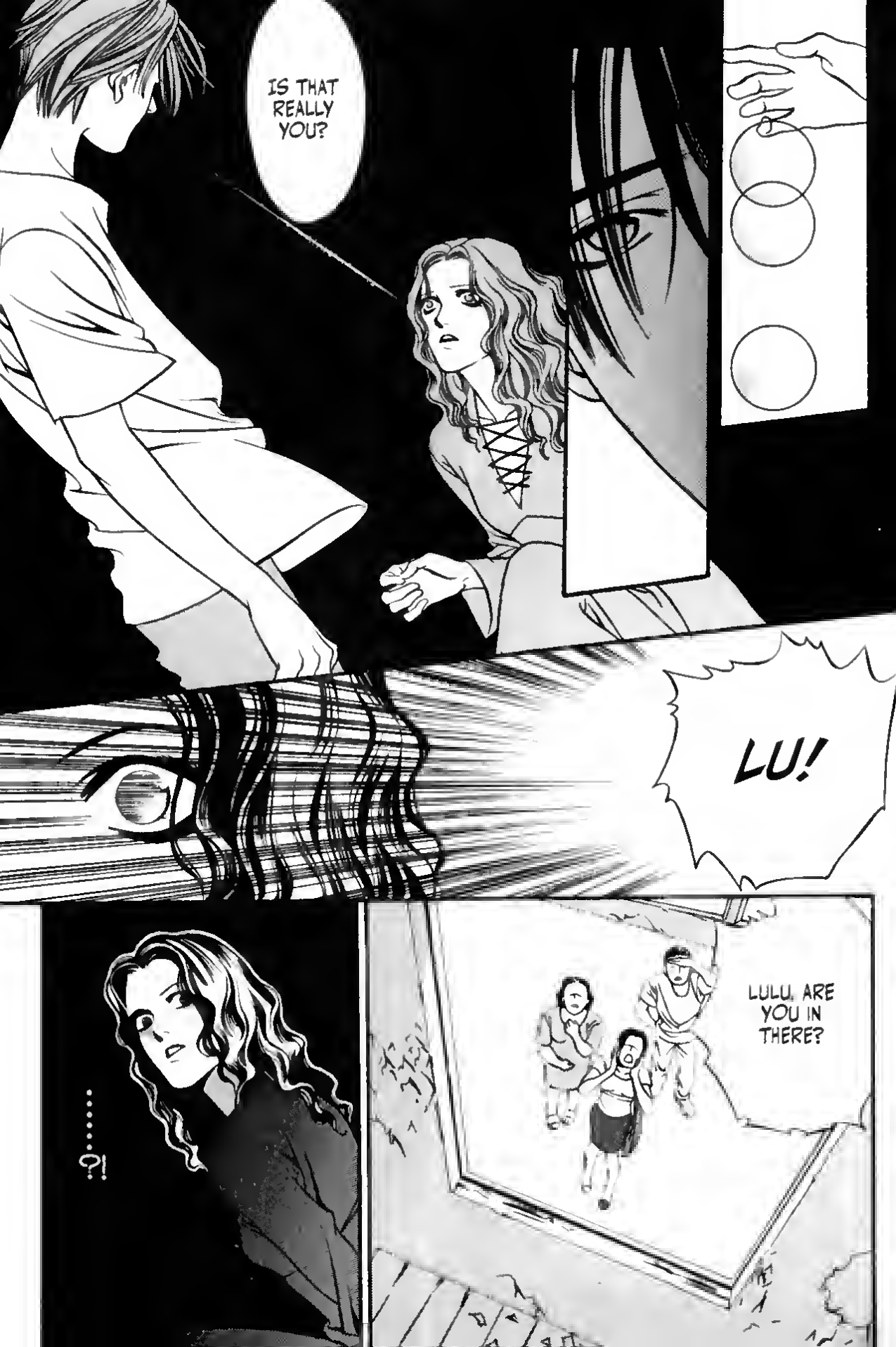
"MEI FANG, THERE'S SOMETHING I NEED TO TELL YOU. IT'S ABOUT THAT FRIEND WHO LULU KEEPS TALKING ABOUT."
"SHE BROUGHT HIM OVER."
"GRANDMA, I BROUGHT MY FRIEND!"
OH, NO. LU...!
MRS. LIN?
LU!

OF COURSE, THE FIRST THING I THOUGHT OF WAS THAT HOUSE BY THE POND.
...WHEN I LOOKED, THERE WAS NOBODY THERE.
BUT...
"DON'T JUST STAND THERE. COME ON IN!"
...BUT...
YOU CAME.
I DIDN'T WANT TO BELIEVE IT, OF COURSE...
...THAT FRIEND OF HERS— HE WASN'T HUMAN...

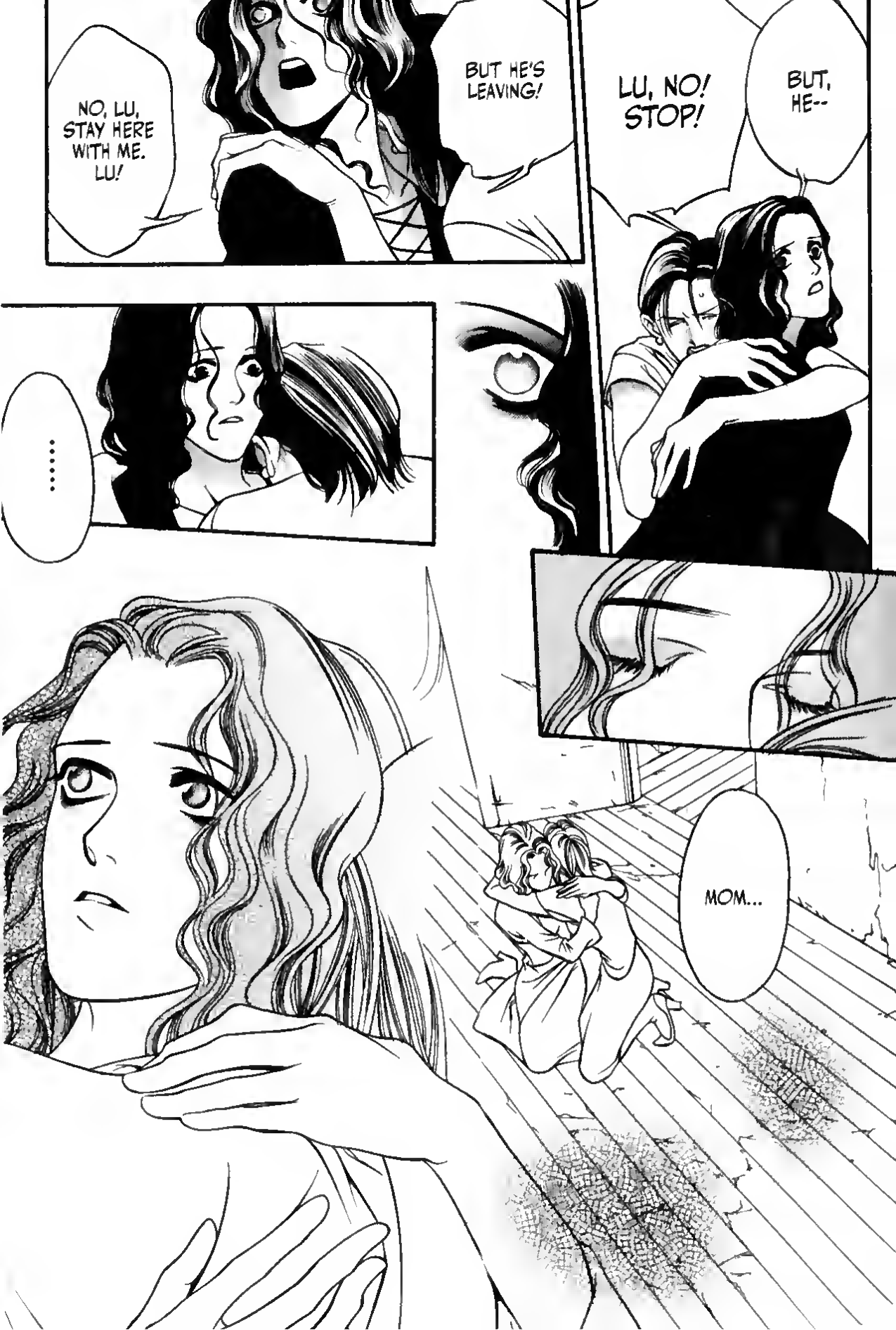
LULU?
.....!
LULU ...
NO...
YOU'RE NOT LULU.
IT'S HIM!

SHE'S MY ONLY FRIEND.
SHE'S AROUND FIVE YEARS OLD AND ABOUT THIS TALL.
IT'S THE BOY FROM MY DREAM...
HAVE YOU SEEN A LITTLE GIRL WITH PIGTAILS?
BECAUSE I PROMISED HER I WOULD. AND SHE PROMISED TO COME BACK...
I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR HER HERE.
"PROMISE ..."
...SO I KNOW SHE'S COMING.

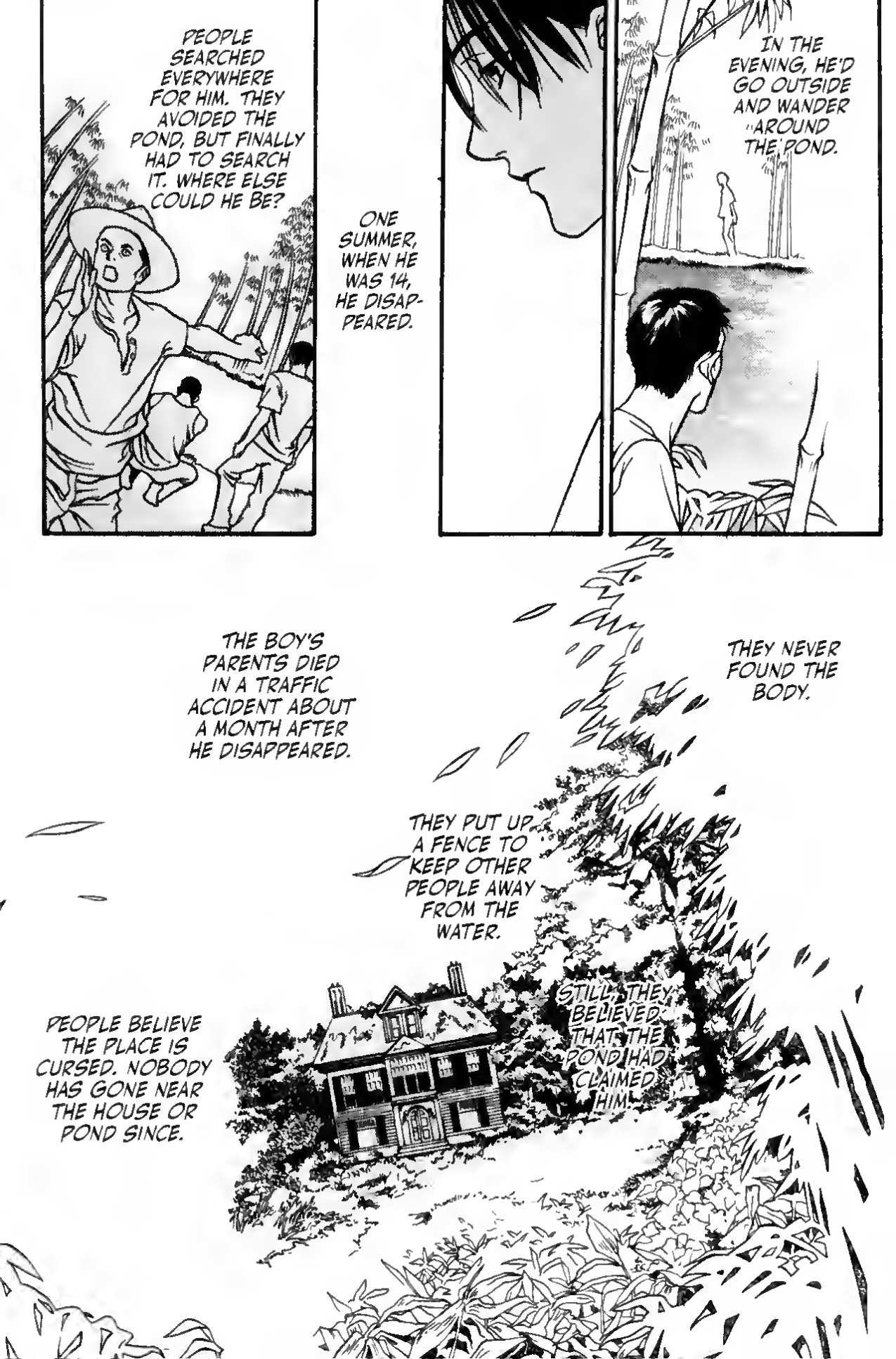
"...WAIT FOR ME!"
"YOU HAVE TO..."
"PROMISE TO WAIT FOR ME!"
"WAIT FOR ME..."
"HI."
"IS THIS YOUR BALL?"


IS THAT REALLY YOU?
LU!
LULU, ARE YOU IN THERE?
.....?!

BOUNCE
LU!
MOM?
.....!
LULU, LISTEN TO ME!
COME BACK TO ME, LU! LOOK AT ME! LOOK AT YOUR MOTHER!
SLAP
SLAP
YES, LU! IT'S ME.

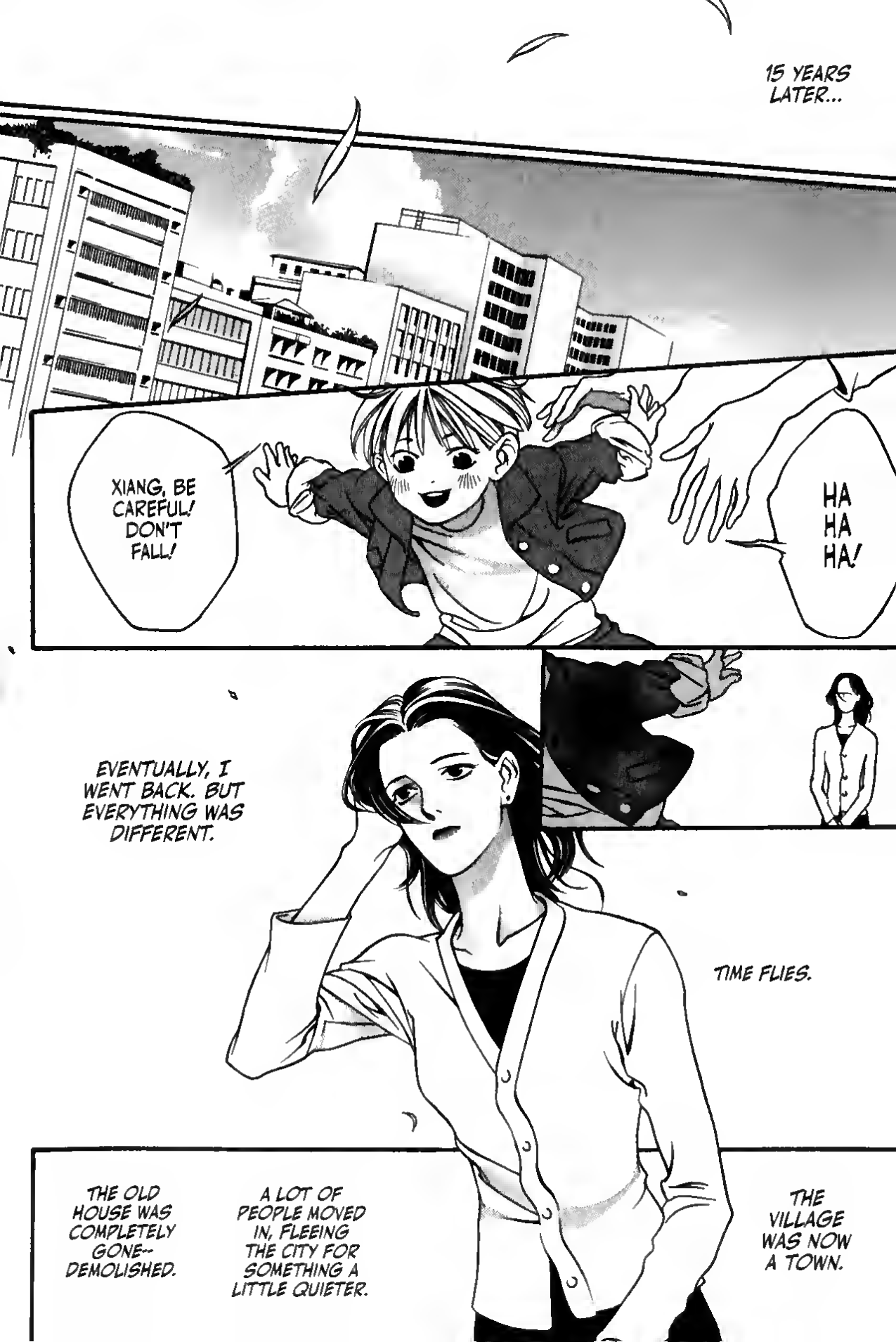

NO, LU, STAY HERE WITH ME. LU!
BUT HE'S LEAVING!
LU, NO! STOP!
BUT, HE--
.....
MOM...

...OF THE BOY AND THE HOUSE.
LATER, MY MOTHER FINALLY DECIDED TO TELL ME THE STORY...
...FOR HIS ONLY SON.
THIRTY YEARS AGO, A BUSINESS-MAN FROM TAIPEI BUILT THE HOUSE...
HE STAYED INSIDE ALL THE TIME.
HE DIDN'T EVEN GO TO SCHOOL. HE HAD A TUTOR.
THE BOY WAS VERY SICK.
HE WAS ALWAYS ALONE.
HE DIDN'T HAVE ANY FRIENDS AND NO BROTHERS OR SISTERS. HIS FAMILY WAS RICH, AND HIS PARENTS WERE ABROAD MOST OF THE TIME.
THAT'S WHY THEY HAD TO LEAVE THE CITY.


PEOPLE SEARCHED EVERYWHERE FOR HIM. THEY AVOIDED THE POND, BUT FINALLY HAD TO SEARCH IT. WHERE ELSE COULD HE BE?
ONE SUMMER, WHEN HE WAS 14, HE DISAP-PEARED.
IN THE EVENING, HE'D GO OUTSIDE AND WANDER AROUND THE POND.
THE BOY'S PARENTS DIED IN A TRAFFIC ACCIDENT ABOUT A MONTH AFTER HE DISAPPEARED.
THEY NEVER FOUND THE BODY.
THEY PUT UP A FENCE TO KEEP OTHER PEOPLE AWAY FROM THE WATER.
STILL, THEY BELIEVED THAT THE POND HAD CLAIMED HIM.
PEOPLE BELIEVE THE PLACE IS CURSED. NOBODY HAS GONE NEAR THE HOUSE OR POND SINCE.

"ARE YOU ALONE?"
"UH-HUH."
"SO YOU'RE ALL BY YOURSELF?"
"WELL, SO AM I!"
"WE SHOULD BE FRIENDS!"
"WHAT'S THAT?"
"IT'S A DRAGONFLY."
"WHERE DOES IT LIVE?"

"IN THE POND..."
I WAITED. I'M NOT SURE HOW LONG.
AFTERWARD, MY FATHER JUST LOOKED AT ME, BUT HE DIDN'T SAY ANYTHING.
IT'S ME...
YOUR FRIEND LULU!
IT'S ME! ARE YOU THERE?
BUT I DID GO BACK TO THE HOUSE A FEW TIMES.
BUT I NEVER SAW HIM AGAIN.
AND THAT WAS IT. WE MOVED TO TAIPEI.


15 YEARS LATER...
XIANG, BE CAREFUL! DON'T FALL!
HA HA HA!
EVENTUALLY, I WENT BACK. BUT EVERYTHING WAS DIFFERENT.
TIME FLIES.
THE OLD HOUSE WAS COMPLETELY GONE-- DEMOLISHED.
A LOT OF PEOPLE MOVED IN, FLEEING THE CITY FOR SOMETHING A LITTLE QUIETER.
THE VILLAGE WAS NOW A TOWN.

...WAS THE POND.
THE ONLY THING LEFT...
NEW BUILDINGS HAD SPRUNG UP IN ITS PLACE.
EVEN THE BAMBOO TREES WERE GONE.
AH!
!
THAT BALL...
XIANG, WHERE DID YOU FIND THIS BALL?
HUH?
I DIDN'T FIND IT! HE GAVE IT TO ME!

SEE MY NEW FRIEND!
MAMA.
YES?
LET'S GO, XIANG.
LULU?
WHO'S LULU?
LULU WAS...
...FOR TAKING CARE OF ME.
THANK YOU...

UNDER THE NIGHT SKY
FOREVER
A BOY LIES
SILENTLY
AMIDST THE PROCESSION OF STARS
REFLECTED IN INK-BLACK WATERS.
· · · The End · · ·

New York Anime Festival 2007

Through the eyes of Jo Chen

December 7—9 of 2007 marked the first year af the anime convention "New York Anime Fest" in New Yark City. Busy vendors, panelists ond performances an the TOKYOPOP Stage kept the flaars crowded with excited ottendees, and amang them wos Jo Chen.

Already a veteron on the con flaar, this wos Ja Chen's first time ottending with TOKYOPOP, os we were pramating the releose af *The Other Side of the Mirrar.* We taak the time to osk Ja Chen to reflect a bit an her time there...

How mony other conventions hove you ottended during your coreer os on ortist/writer? Hove ony fun stories from one of them?

Jo: My first conventions were in Taiwon where, os teenogers, we peddled our daujinshi (self-published camic books) ond reloted products such os posters, cards, bookmorks, etc. Thase were greot ond o lot of fun. We pooled our money, negatiated with printers, helped ta argonize the con itself... all af thot.

When I first published The Other Side of the Mirror, I had olreody immigroted ta the U.S. and returned to help pramote the debut of my book. Becouse this porticulor trode show wos sizoble and argonized by publishers launching new boaks, each artist wos limited to o line af 200 fons for the signings. Some ortists were more populor thon athers, and one porticulor guest artist who hod come from Hang Kong to stump hod na fans ot all.

I discovered this by orriving ot the publisher's affices prior ta the con and faund the entire building empty, which is add since Tong Li is o lorge campany. In foct, oll of the employees hod been dragooned ond herded to the can to comprise the fan line of 200 for the unsuspecting ortist who wos there ta sign his new book. Even I and my husband-then-boyfriend joined the octian.

Once in the signing line, the press phatagropher from the HK publisher grabbed the only gwei lau (foreign devil) in the line ond pressed him inta a photo op with the artist; as if ta soy, "Heyl This artist is so papular, even the foreign devils read his booksl" The phatagrapher kept shouting, "It's a special eventl It's o special eventl" The gwei lau wos of course my husbond. Now, when we're in on awkward situotion, we always soy, "It's o special eventl" ond hove o lough.

At thot same canvention, one of my fans picked up o cup thot I'd been drinking fram ond wanted to keep my bockwashl I grinned, snotched the cup and dumped it in the garbage right in frant of him. It was wrong on so many levels.

Whot sorts of octivities were you osked to do with TOKYOPOP ot the convention?

I participoted in a few panels with other writer-ortists in which we discussed writing mongo, story ond charocter development. Since mast af us work in isolotian, it is quite nice ond refreshing to actuolly heor other ortists' viewpoints ond gain insight into their creotive processes, first hand. I enjoyed that the most.

Also, I enjoy meeting people who like my work. It's always good to hear thot I'm not toiling owoy in vain; it's good for the ego. Signings and portfolio reviews ore o nice way ta accomplish this. These events serve os ice-breokers and relieve peaple of having ta moke much smoll talk since they ore in line to meet yau for o specific purpose: get something signed or hove you look ot their artwark. (cont'd on next page)

A glowing autograph from Jo Chen

(cont'd from prev page)
My least favorite things at anime cons, in general, are the opening and closing ceremonies or a panel in which I'm the only person on a large stage, standing in a spotlight with a mic. Having to be on stage by myself is a terrifying prospect for me because I'm a fairly shy person by nature. Having other artists up there with me eases those tensions considerably, but it doesn't make me like it.

Did you get to explore a bit of New York City during your time there? See anything fun?

Jo: Well, I've been to NYC several times prior, and this time, I didn't really do any sightseeing. I do have a brother and friends there. So, it was a nice opportunity to get together with them. And of course to go to the Japanese bookstores and spend all of my disposable income.

Any final impressions of your time at NYAF?

Jo: It was a very nice experience, and I had a lot of fun. The activities were well organized by TOKYOPOP. Most of the conventions that I attend, I'm anchored to a table or booth that I've rented, don't get to enjoy the con activities and just wander the floor as an attendee. It's usually work. But this time, I really had an opportunity to just enjoy myself and the panels I attended and participated in.

I didn't get to bump into my friends Peter Fernandez and Corinne Orr, who were also guests of the convention, but I did finally get to meet Svetlana Chmakova, with whom I'd been corresponding for quite a while. In fact, I almost missed my train home due to our chat that last day. All in all, it was a great time.

Thank you so much, and here's hoping for another great year at New York Anime Fest!

Jo Chen's Workplace

How long do you usually spend at your desk or your studio a day?

Jo: In the past, I would spend up to 16 hours per day at my desk drawing and painting. Now, I try to limit it to eight hours. With all of my other responsibilities, that is about all that I have time for.

Do you like to play any music while you work?

Jo: While I'm brainstorming a story arc or dialogue, I don't play any music. I need to minimize distractions. When I'm doing the actual pencil work, laying out the panels, I usually pick an appropriate film score to listen to for inspiration and to help set the right mood. Once I'm inking or applying zipatone, that's the time to listen to rock to get my adrenaline going.

How do you keep from getting distracted during work?

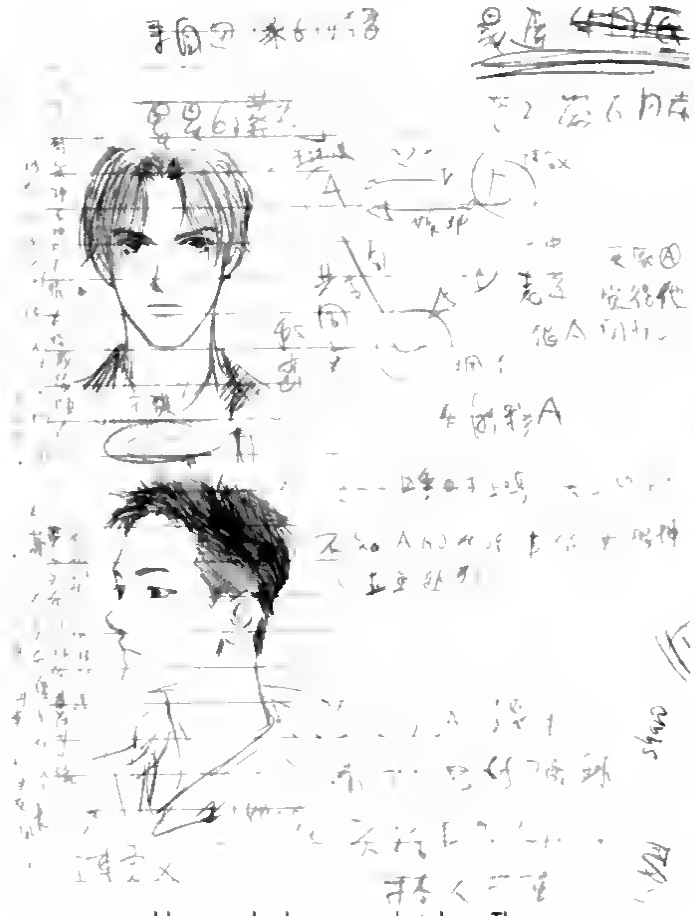
Jo: It's not easy. One would think that working at home alone would minimize distractions, but in my case, I'm dealing with interruptions by family members and ringing telephones. If I happen to be working with my sister, she will alert me if I drift away from what I should be doing. Editors' phone calls and emails also help keep me on track.

BONUS GALLERY

As *The Other Side of the Mirror* comes to on end, Jo Chen gifts us with more bonus moteriol to reveol the creotive process for her stories. With the romonce of Sunny ond Lou put to rest, short stories *Peggy* ond *Funeral Procession of the Stars* round out the lineup of bittersweet toles of loss ond lost love...

The ending is pretty much what I planned. Using hindsight, I think that I might have done a few things differently with the storytelling that occurs between the major events in plot. I knew my beginning, and I knew my end; but the middle was a rough ride for me when I was producing it. I'm glad I finished it, though. It's a great experience doing your own graphic novel.

I'm a precision freak when it comes to finished pencils and inks. I hate to see smudges or white-out blotches on the original artwork. I usually finish the rough-draft pencil on plain white paper and then use the rough as a guide for the detailed pencils. Here, the light table becomes a critical part of the process. The rough is placed underneath the illustration board, and the light table illuminates the lines enough for me to trace. I use regular mechanical pencils and HB leads to mitigate smudges and smears, leaving only very clean pencil lines on the illustration board. Then it's ready to ink.



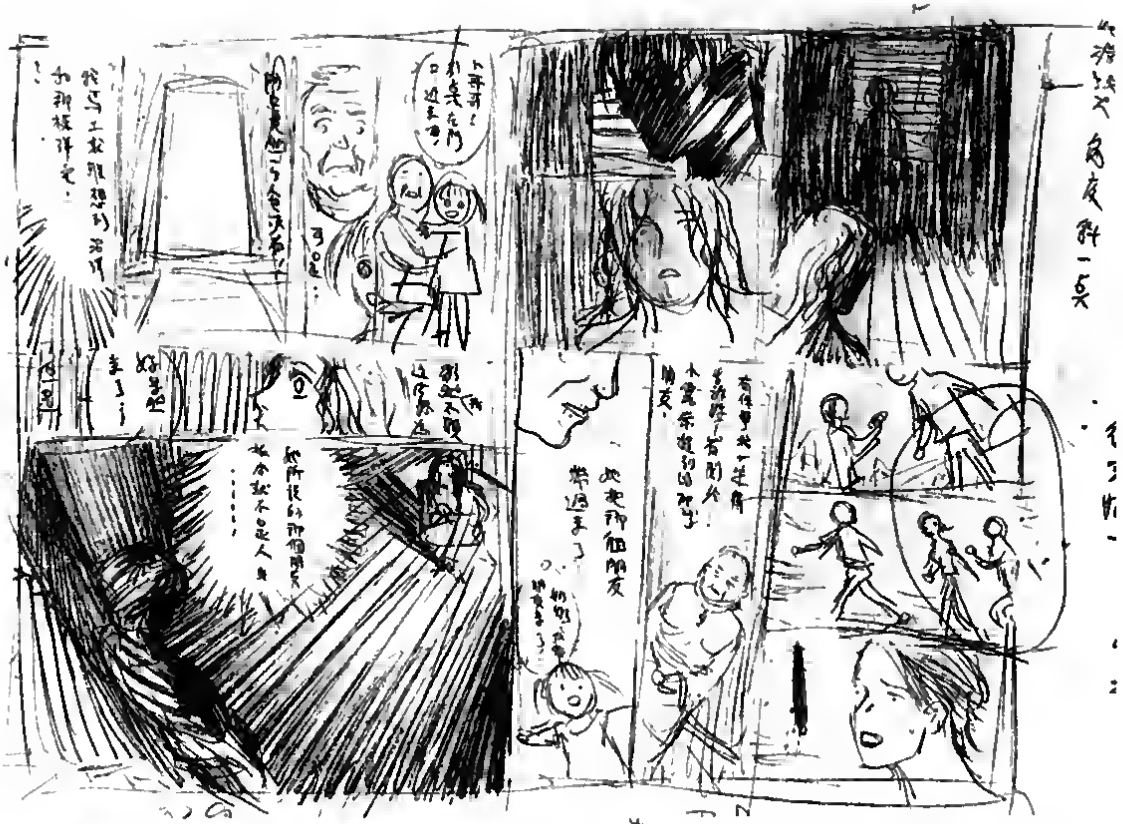
When I'm working out on ideo mentally, I will creote snotches of diolague or conversotion or invent some details obaut the interpersonal relatianships between choracters and jot them dawn an o page occomponied by rough chorocter sketches. These serve os good references for me loter when I'm fleshing out things.

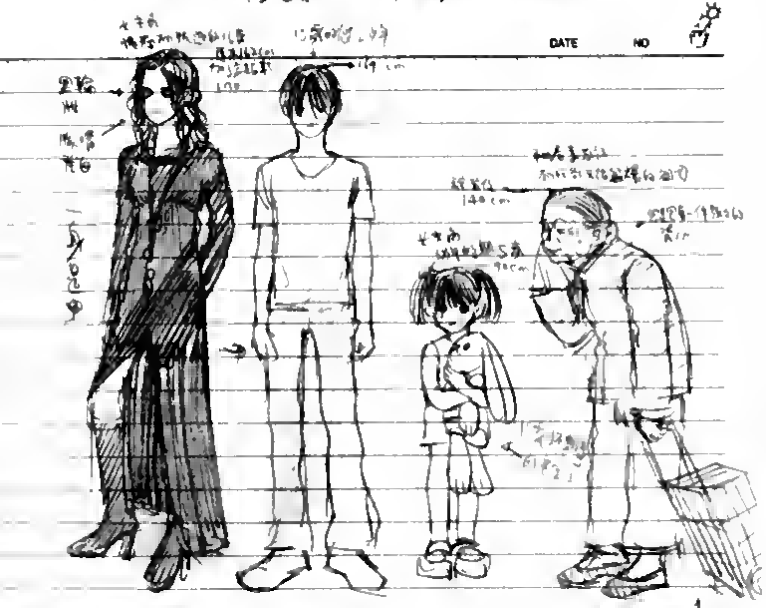
In Toiwon, mony junior high ond high schools ore segregoted by sex. I saw instances af hamosexuality, ond I wos bullied by other girls who saw me os on eosy torget. I olsa knew girls wham I idalized. Sa, these themes ore not difficult anes and are probobly pretty universol in Asian sacieties. And as a result, they ore common themes in shauja manga.

My editar, Zhang Zheng-Ying, thaught that the reader wauld be dissatisfied with the canclusian of "Peggy" and suggested a happier ending in which Pineapple Head reaches same acceptonce af Peiqi. I thought this wauldn't wark and went completely against the established nature af Pineapple Head. It cauldn't have ended any ather woy. So, I orgued far my ending, which allaws the readers' imaginotions some room ta maneuver, ond Zheng-Ying the editor finally capitulated.

Later, my instincts for the story were validated in that peaple really responded to it. Some did feel that the ending wos too cruel but certainly nat unsatisfactary. I think they would hove felt cheoted with a neat, hoppy ending af thase two humping in the glow of love

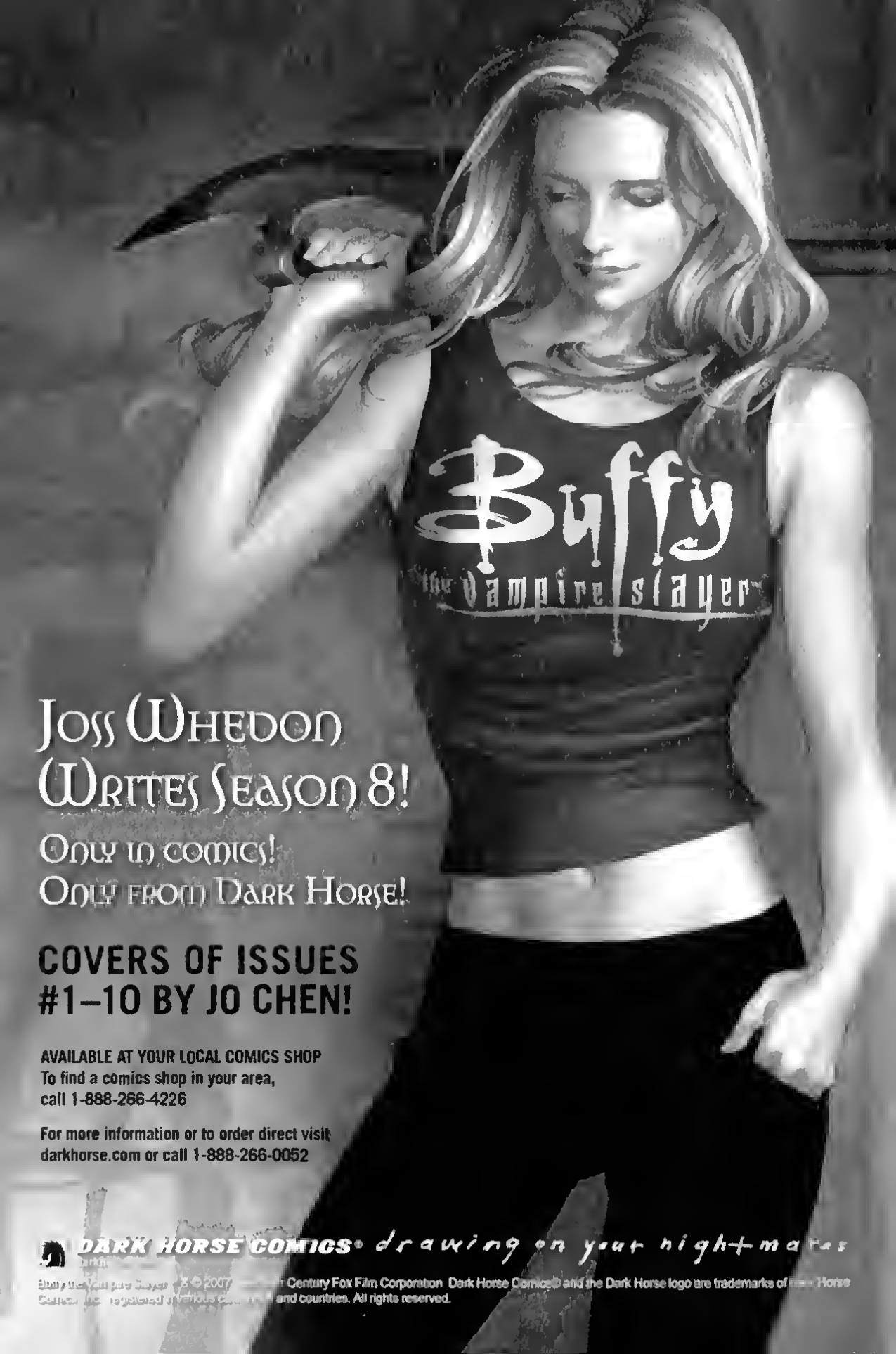
The editor did accasianally request chonges in my wark. Although the sketch displayed here is one that was appraved, I did hove to change same poges. For example, there were poges that I submitted that the editor felt slowed the pace af the story or distracted the reader with same inconsequential plat tongent, ond sa thase pages were discarded. They were nat finished pages, mind yau, just raughs. Sa, at that stage, it is easier far the creatar ta let ga af them. Once samething is finished and is the subject of a cut far whatever reosan, it is a much mare difficult ta acquiesce to the propased edit.





I wanted ta create a creepy but ramantic maad far this story. Much af it is based upan my childhaad ematians and experiences; curiasity abaut and fear af ghasts, the intrigue af mysteriaus tales, playing with my friends in the bambaa thickets, trespassing in abandaned hauses we thaught might be haunted, running in the reeds alang the river's shares, etc. All af these things I did and attempted ta add them ta the stary. The ghast represents the girl's childhaad. It is samething she can see as a child but is unable ta see as a jaded adalescent—the lass af childhaad innacence. As an adult laaking back at my awn past, I tried ta impart this warm sense af lass af bygane days. It is something the prataganist is able ta regain, partially, when she has her awn child wha sees the specter. She can't see it, but she feels its presence. And this brings back to her the camfart af thase warm memaries.

When I laak back aver many af my shart staries, there are a lat af ald falks. I think it must remind me af my grandmather wha cared far me while I was yaung and bath af my parents were warking. I feel camfartable drawing ald peaple, and sa I gat what I wanted in the granny right aff. Canversely, the little girl was mare difficult. My ariginal drawings af her didn't capture the innacence that I wanted, and I had ta re-design her sa that she was cuter and mare endearing, completely devaid af guile.



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